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goal! Weekly

Season 5: Issue 3 Monday 9th March 2009

FOOTBALL FEATURE ON BAILEY WRIGHT

FOOTBALL FOCUS ON JASON DAVIDSON

BENDING OVER FOR BECKHAM

Photo: Peter Kakalias

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SL NW2 FIXTURES / JIMMY MACKAY / VPL ROUND 2

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WRIGHT HEADS TO UK

Bailey Signs Two-Year Deal With Preston

LANGWARRIN teenager Bailey Wright has signed a two-year scholarship with English Championship outfit Preston North End, currently in the hunt for promotion to the Premiership.

The former Victorian Institute of Sport star and Joeys defender flies to England in late June and while that's a blow for the club he joined as a junior it's an enormous opportunity for this confident 16-year-old to kick-start what could be a successful career as a professional footballer.

And the ironic twist to his tale is that he only trained with Preston for a day late last year before spending a week on trial with Blackburn Rovers.

"I think Preston liked the physical aspects of my game. The players were really welcoming which made it a lot easier and after the session the club told me that they were interested and they knew that I was going to Blackburn," said Wright.

Wright was injured during his Blackburn trial and the Ewood Park outfit could not properly assess him but Preston had seen enough and offered him a scholarship which he accepted.

He'll play in Preston's youth team from the outset under coach Jamie Hoyland and no doubt director of youth Dean Ramsdale and assistant Nick Harrison will be keeping a close watch on Wright's progress.

The teenager will arrive at the Deepdale stadium already aware that he's joining a club steeped in history. It tells you something about how keen he is to forge a professional career that he's even bothered to learn some important aspects of the club's background.

"It's one of the longest serving clubs in the league and you soon learn about all those famous names like Finney. I've been to the (National Football) museum and they've even got the old Wembley goals there. It's awesome."

And "awesome" is a word you'll hear often from Wright who still is over-the-moon at the opportunity that's been offered to him.

Preston is a founder member of the Football League and became the champion of the world's first professional league in 1889 when it went through the season unbeaten.

Current boss Alan Irvine is in illustrious company. Some of the game's greatest names have managed the famous club among them Alan Ball, Bobby Charlton, Nobby Stiles and Tommy Docherty.

Yep, that's awesome alright. But it won't overawe a youngster who'll soon be flying halfway around the world to live in digs with other hopefuls.

That's because of the many people who have played a part in nurturing Wright's talents, not just on the field, but off. He's level-headed, ambitious and talented, a potent mix indeed.

Wright started playing with Langwarrin as a five-year-old. He was coached by his father Andy back then and has great respect for his father's influence.

Sixteen-year-old Bailey Wright heads to Preston North End at the end of June to take up a two-year deal. Photo: SUE MACKIE.

"Dad always was honest with me. Honesty gets you a long way. He always told me when I played well and when I had a bad game. You're not going to get anywhere if you get told you've done well when you've had a bad game," said Wright.

Next port of call was Mornington's Under-13 Super League side coached by Nick Townsend but at the ripe old age of 13 he joined Division One outfit Dandenong Thunder in 2005 and played regularly in the club's reserves under Toby Paterson.

"I'd never really got close to playing for Victoria before but I'm sure lots of kids got overlooked a few years back. I made the Vic Under-14 Metro side and that's really when I got involved in the system."

Paterson had recognised the teenager's talents and arranged trials with Scottish giant Celtic and English outfit Crewe Alexandra.

"We went to the UK in September (2005) and mum and dad and my twin sister came as well. I was at Celtic for a week but didn't get much feedback and I had a week at Crewe. They told me I was a good player but that I had to work on my fitness."

Wright captained the Victorian Under-14 and Under-15 Metro sides at national championships and accepted a scholarship to the VIS in 2006.

"The VIS was brilliant, a really professional environment and (head coach) Ian Greener taught me a lot as a player and gave me confidence. I wasn't good at keeping possession but they worked hard on that and I'm a lot better in that area now.

"Mehmet Durakovic was the assistant coach and he helped out with defensive aspects of my game so I've got a lot to thank the VIS for."

The introduction of the Australian Institute of Sport team into Victoria's Premier League in 2007 also heralded the entry of Wright and his VIS teammates into that league's reserves competition and it was also in 2007 that Wright had another "awesome" experience.

"Yeah, touring the UK with the VIS that year was awesome. We had some good results and some not so good but it was just amazing to play against the youth sides from some of the biggest clubs in the game."

Bigger still was his inclusion in the Joeys squad that made it to the finals of the Asian Football Confederation Under-16 championships held in Uzbekistan last October. Wright played in a 6–0 rout of Turkmenistan but the young Aussies went down 3–2 to United Arab Emirates in the quarter-finals, the UAE winner coming in injury time.

"There's nothing like it. Nothing comes close. It's awesome playing for your country."

Wanting to play senior football before flying to the UK, Wright trained during the pre-season with Dandenong Thunder, newly promoted to Premier League but when senior coach Stuart Munro indicated to Wright that the youngster might not get a regular game in stepped Langwarrin supremo Gus Macleod.

"You hear some people say bad things about Thunder but they really treated me well. The people there were really nice to me and helped me a lot.

"As soon as I started training with Langwarrin Gus put me into the first team and played me every week in the practice games, which was great.

"It's only a five-minute walk to training which beats an hour and a half and sometimes two hours to get to training with the VIS."

While Wright is enjoying himself at Langy the thought of joining a professional club with a chance of playing in the English Premiership is never far away. Likewise the thought of one day becoming a full-time pro.

"How good would it be to make a living out of something that you love doing?"

Wright will join a Lancashire club whose promotion push is matched by its off-field impetus. A major redevelopment of Deepdale began in 1995 when the old West Stand was demolished to make way for the new £4.4m Sir Tom Finney Stand which has a capacity of around 8000 and includes press areas and restaurants.

The next stand to be developed was the Bill Shankley Kop in 1998. The National Football museum runs underneath these stands with the entrance at the corner of the two.

The Alan Kelly Town End was next to be built replacing the popular Town End terrace and in 2008 the Invincibles Pavilion opened to complete the regeneration.

Just as well because they'll need the extra seating to house the Wright clan that consists of his dad, mum Jeanette, older sisters Nicole and Amanda, older brother Craig and twin sister Maddison.

Rest assured though that Preston will accommodate the Wrights, especially if the youngest family member follows in the footsteps of a couple of Aussies called Neil and Cahill.

By Craig MacKenzie

Finger On The Pulse Dept.

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Front Cover
Thunder's Joey Di Iorio celebrates with fans after scoring a 87th minute winning goal against the Cannons.
Photo: Peter Kakalias.

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'ROOS STUMBLE!

Kuwaitis Inflict Capital Punishment

Australia sit rooted to the bottom of Group B in qualifying for the 2011 AFC Asian Cup after defeat at the hands of a spirited Kuwait in Canberra on Thursday evening.

A record local crowd for an international football match of 20,032 filled Canberra Stadium, and were lamenting a lacklustre display from Australia as they fell 1-0 to the visitors. The loss added further weight to the anti-A-League bandwagon, with the part-timers from Kuwait illustrating a more cohesive style of football in comparison to the more fancied yet vastly underdone hosts.

An impeccable playing surface allowed for an intricate passing game, yet it was Kuwait that adjusted to the conditions with indelible ease. The early passages were dominated by midfielder Talal Alamer, who had as many as four clear chances on goal in the opening ten minutes.

Iranian referee Masoud Moradi was called into action in the 10th minute, issuing a yellow card to Michael Zullo for a raised foot challenge on midfielder Jarah Alateeqi. Melbourne Victory's A-League Grand Final hero Tomi Pondeljak emerged with his first sight on goal in the 12th minute, his miscued shot from twenty yards barely testing the Kuwaiti custodian Nawaf Alkhaldi. Five minutes later, a defensive lapse from Craig Moore gifted Hamad Alanezi with a golden chance, but Eugene Galekovic was on hand to make a smart save.

Australia's best chance of the half came in the 23rd minute, with some fine interplay from Archie Thompson, Pondeljak and Zullo drawing Alkhaldi out of his goal and leaving Thompson clear to score. His scuffed left-foot attempt was cleared off the line by Fahed Shaheen directly into the path of Pondeljak, who drilled the ball into the post from point-blank range.

Despite enjoying almost two-thirds of the possession, the Socceroos lacked cohesion and spark, a result of the largely inexperienced line-up that took the field, clearly illustrated when Kuwait opened the scoring in the 37th minute. A superb delivery from Bader Al Motawaa found a poorly marked Mesaed Alenzi who headed the ball neatly passed a stranded Galekovic.

The good folk of Canberra got to see first hand how wanting our boys can be at times.

Australia's best chance of an equaliser arrived a couple of minutes later, Pondeljak again failing to trouble the resolute Alkhaldi, who was marshalling his defence admirably in the face of a parochial home crowd.

The second half was more illustrative of Kuwait's danger on the counter attack rather than Australia's ability to mount any meaningful charge towards goal. Al Motawaa had multiple chances to finish off the Socceroos, and the absence of a quality finish was the key factor in maintaining the intensity in the contest. Despite the addition of Mitch Nicholls and Robert Cornthwaite in a surprise role as striker, Kuwait held on for a deserved away win.

Pim Verbeek paid credit to the opposition, but could not hide his frustration at the final outcome, "We are very disappointed about the result and also about the performance. I think Kuwait was the better team, but I have seen my players playing better." Verbeek was mindful of the counter-attacking style of play which Kuwait brought to the equation, and summed up his charges display with a frank honesty, "You have to play faster... that's exactly what we didn't do, we played too slow, there was not enough movement in the team, the final pass was not good... overall, very disappointing."

The Socceroos' focus returns to the World Cup Qualifiers on April 1, with the return fixture against Uzbekistan at ANZ Stadium in Sydney. No doubt, the inclusion of Australia's overseas starlets will be welcomed with open arms, but the lingering question mark over the standard of the A-League will continue to be a point of concern for Verbeek when the competition resumes in November.

By Tony Persoglia
Photo: Geoff Jones

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
OMAN	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
KUWAIT	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	3
INDONESIA	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
AUSTRALIA	**2**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**-1**	**1**

THE ROAD TO QATAR

19 Jan 2009 OMAN - INDONESIA 0:0	18 Nov 2009 OMAN - AUSTRALIA
28 Jan 2009 INDONESIA - AUST 0:0	18 Nov 2009 INDONESIA - KUWAIT
28 Jan 2009 KUWAIT - OMAN 0:1	6 Jan 2010 INDONESIA - OMAN
5 Mar 2009 AUST - KUWAIT 0-1	6 Jan 2010 KUWAIT - AUSTRALIA
14 Nov 2009 AUSTRALIA - OMAN	3 Mar 2010 OMAN - KUWAIT
14 Nov 2009 KUWAIT - INDONESIA	3 Mar 2010 AUST - INDONESIA

VPL STANDINGS

errea

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
1. Richmond	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
2. Dandenong Thunder	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
3. Green Gully Cavaliers	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
4. Oakleigh Cannons	2	1	0	1	4	2	3
5. Altona Magic	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
6. Melbourne Knights	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
7. Sunshine Georgies	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
8. Heidelberg Utd	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
9. Preston Lions	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
10. South Melbourne	2	0	0	2	0	2	0
11. Hume City	2	0	0	2	0	2	0
12. Whittlesea Zebras	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

VPL RESULTS

Oakleigh Cannons 0 Dandenong Thunder 1
Richmond 1 Melbourne Knights 0
Altona Magic A Preston Lions A* (Match abandoned)*
Sunshine Georgies 1 Hume City 0
South Melbourne 0 Heidelberg United 1
Whittlesea Zebras v Green Gully* *(Playing tonight)**

VPL UNDER 21 DETAILS

Richmond 1 Melbourne Knights 2, Altona Magic 1 Preston Lions 0, Sunshine Georgies 1 Hume City 2,

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Altona Magic	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Melbourne Knights	3	2	0	1	3	3	6
South Melbourne	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
V.I.S	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Richmond	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Hume City	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Oakleigh Cannons	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Heidelberg Utd	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Green Gully Cavaliers	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sunshine Georgies	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Whittlesea Zebras	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Preston Lions	2	0	0	2	0	2	0
Dandenong Thunder	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

ROUND THREE FIXTURES

Oakleigh Cannons
v
Melbourne Knights
Jack Edwards Res
Fri 13 Mar KO 8:30PM

Green Gully
v
Dandenong Thunder
Green Gully Reserve
Sat 14 Mar KO 5PM

Altona Magic
v
Richmond Eagles
Paisley Park
Sat 14 Mar KO 7:30PM

Hume City
v
Whittlesea Zebras
Broadmeadows Valley Park
Sun 15 Mar KO 4:00PM

Preston Lions
v
South Melbourne
BT Connor Reserve
Sun 15 Mar KO 5PM

Heidelberg Utd
v
Sunshine Georgies
Olympic Village
Mon 16 Mar KO8:30PM

ANDREW FISHER'S KISS OF DEATH - Round 3

OAKLEIGH V MELBOURNE KNIGHTS:
Fri 13th Mar, 8:30pm Jack Edwards Reserve
Both sides suffered their first loss last week, and will be out to make amends. The Cannons and the Knights have played out some very tight contested football that is usually decided by the odd goal.
SCORE DRAW

Last 5 Meetings: Knights 1-0 Oak (2008), Oak 1-1 Knights (2008), Knights 1-0 Oak (2007 Finals), Knights 1-0 Oak (2007), Oak 2-1 Knights (2006)

GREEN GULLY V DANDENONG:
Sat 14th Mar, 5:00pm Green Gully Reserve
Dandenong have sent a clear message to the rest of the competition. Having picked up the prized scalps of South Melbourne and Oakleigh they now target the 'Green Machine' on their own turf. Green Gully will not roll out the red carpet for the Thunder, expect goals in this match.
HOME WIN

Last 5 Meetings: Gully 1-2 Dand (2001), Dand 2-2 Gully (2001), Gully 1-1 Dand (1999), Dand 2-3 Gully (1999), Gully 4-0 Dand (1998)

ALTONA MAGIC V RICHMOND:
Sat 14th Mar, 7:30pm Paisley Park.
Richmond have had the perfect start to the season, however come against their toughest opponents in reigning champions Altona Magic. Altona will be hoping to halt the Eagles charge, and the groundsmen will be hoping the lighting stays on for this one.
SCORE DRAW

Last 5 Meetings: Altona 2-1 Rich (2008), Rich 1-1 Altona (2008), Rich 1-0 Altona (2007), Altona 2-1 Rich (2007), Altona 0-1 Rich (2006)

HUME CITY V WHITTLESEA:
Sun 15th Mar, 4:00pm Broadmeadows Valley Park
Hume City coach Goran Lozanovski will be under immense pressure for his side to pick up maximum points after faltering in the opening two fixtures. A win against the Zebra's will be the first step to turn things around. **HOME WIN**

Last 5 Meetings: Whitt 0-0 Hume (2008), Hume 1-0 Whitt (2008), DNP

PRESTON V SOUTH MELBOURNE:
Sun 15th Mar, 5:00pm BT Connor Reserve
With both Preston and South Melbourne yet to get points on the board, makes this fixture between bitter rivals that extra special. South Melbourne have yet to register a goal in this season's competition, and a loss here will have the supporters question the club's title ambitions. Preston at home is always a touch match. **SCORE DRAW**

Last 5 Meetings: South 1-2 Preston (2008), Preston 1-2 South (2008), South 3-3 Preston (2007), Preston 2-2 South (2007), South 2-1 Preston (2006)

HEIDELBERG V SUNSHINE:
Mon 16th Mar, 8.30pm Olympic Village
Heidelberg and Sunshine picked up their first wins on the weekend, and will head into this Monday nights blockbuster with full of confidence. A healthy crowd is expected and a quality games is on the cards.
HOME WIN

Last 5 Meetings: Sun 0-1 Heid (2007), Heid 2-1 Sun (2007), Sun 1-0 Heid (2006), Heid 1-4 Sun (2006), Heid 3-1 Sun (2005)

For those who like a flutter on the English betting sites, my outside bet would be Richmond upsetting Altona Magic at home. This week's safe bet: Hume City to beat Whittlesea. Remember bet responsibly.

By Andrew Fisher
Kiss of Death

TOP SHOTS! errea

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Good luck to all the punters, and remember 'keepers, you have been warned!

SUNSHINE GEORGIES

1 - 0

HUME CITY

GEORGIES OPEN SEASON ACOUNT

Hume Frustrated For A Second Week

Sunshine Georgies recorded its first win of the season since its return to the Victorian Premier League with a gutsy one goal to nil victory over a very combative and competitive Hume City outfit on Sunday.

Both Sunshine and Hume City had started the game eager to make amends for their opening round defeats and both teams started with a purpose - trying to wrestle control of the midfield right from kick-off. It was evident early on that this game would be an open one, with both teams intent on playing a good passing game and both sets of midfielders and forwards from both sides doing a mountain of work off the ball to fashion opportunities. In a first-half which saw half chances fall to both teams within the first ten minutes, it was Sunshine who found the decisive and ultimately winning strike of the game when a slick attacking move down the far side of Chaplin reserve saw a ball angled into Lou Acevski's penalty box which was met by Kris Konstas who tucked the ball beyond Acevski to send the Sunshine faithful on the terraces absolutely nuts. For the remainder of the half Hume City worked hard to try and get themselves back into the game without really carving out a clear chance on goal. Sunshine captain Wayne Wallace was having a commanding game marshalling the defence. Half-time and Sunshine had the upper hand by the single goal.

The second half was a cagier affair with Hume City going all out for the goal that would edge them back into the game and Sunshine doing their best to absorb the pressure and counter attack which at times created some hairy moments for Lou Acevski and the defenders in front of him. Sunshine at one stage had the ball in the back of the net and as the Sunshine attacked slid the ball beyond Acevski and was wheeling away to celebrate it was soured by the sight of the linesman's flag. Hard tackles by both sides saw a few yellow cards dished out in the second stanza and Hume City probably shaded the play with Brendan Beni prominent as was George Papadopoulos for The Cross. The Sunshine defence was tested with a number of dangerous crosses and free kicks but managed to survive and Sunshine were actually unlucky not to add a second when Kotsupias beat an onrushing Acevski and lobbed him only to see the lob cleared by a sprawling Hume City defender. Sunshine held on and there we joyous scenes in the Georgie's dressing room and the stands - the home side got its season well and truly up and running.

Next week, for Sunshine it's a trip to the Olympic village to lock horns with Heidelberg United whilst Hume City return to their new home at Broadmeadows Valley Park for what will be a vital game for them against near town rivals Whittlesea. A fixture that both teams realise will warrant a win in order to keep up with the other teaams.

By Rueben Schembri

Photos by Daniel Flis

Hume's Tansel Baser wins the aerial duel against two Georgies players.

The Georgies are off the mark in 2009 after snatching a 1-0 win against Hume City at Chaplin Reserve yesterday.

BERGERS BOUNCE BACK!

Deep Derby Day Pain For South

Heidelberg have bounced back after their first round defeat to Oakleigh to claim an important derby win against their old foe South Melbourne at Bob Jane Stadium on Sunday.

With both teams coming into the contest on the back of uninspiring performances in Round 1, they were intent on getting their season back on track in front of a healthy derby day crowd.

The game started in typical derby fashion, with hard tackles flying in from all angles and some scrappy foootball being played, with no real team gaining any ascendency whatsoever.

Once the game settled, Heidelberg had the first opportunity on goal with Denis Alinovic connecting with an innocuous ball forward to loop a header on target. In what would have been a regulation catch for goalkeeper Tommi Tomich, it appeared that the sun glare caught the custodian off guard, with the ball somehow striking the upright before it was cleared by the South defence.

The away side continued to press forward after this and had half chances from Tony Ouliaris and Graham Hockless fly wide of the target without testing Tomich at all.

South replied late in the half through veteran Vaughan Coveny, who skimmed past the stagnant Heidelberg defence, before hitting a low and hard shot on his left foot towards the target. The ball which was destined for the bottom corner was somehow deflected into the upright by goalkeeper Peter Gavalas before going out for a corner.

Heidelberg started the 2nd half strongly and more determined in the early stages to score a goal.

On the right hand side, new signing Osagie Ederaro was causing the South defence havoc at every opportunity, by continually running at the defenders at speed and also having the confidence to shoot from any angle and distance.

With South on the backfoot, captain and hard working defender Rama Tavsancioglu was booked for a robust challenge. This was to be his 2nd yellow of the evening, meaning that South would play the remaining 20 minutes of the game with 10 men.

For this time, Heidelberg dominated possession and squandered numerous half chances through veterans Eric Vassiliadis and substitute Bobby Petta.

However it was the Bergers who would get the only goal of the tight contest in the 84th minute, when the South defence did not close the oncoming Ederaro before he managed to sensationally lob Tomich from just outside the area to send the small contingent of travelling fans into raptures.

South will need to regroup before its tough away trip to Preston next Sunday, whilst Heidelberg host Sunshine on Monday night at the Olympic Village.

SMFC 0
Heidelberg 1 (Osagie Ederaro)

Man of the Match – Osagie Ederaro

SMFC Line-up
Tommi Tomich, Shane Nunes, Rhodri Payne, Steven O'Dor, Vaughan Coveny, Gianni De Nittis, Joseph Youssef, Rama Tavsancioglu, Stiven Mrkela, Goran Zoric

Heidelberg
Peter Gavalas, Peter Robers, Tony Ouliaris, Daniel Jones, Eric Vassiliadis, Anthony Magnacca, Graham Hockless, Osagie Ederaro, Marinos Gasparis, Denis Alinovic, James Stefanou

By George Kouroumalis

Photos by Peter Kakalias

Heidelberg keeper Peter Gavalas comes out to spoil a South Melbourne attack in the derby clash at Bob Jane.

LIGHT FAILURE STOPS PLAY

Darkness Drama Descends On Derby

Just as the Lions were in the ascendancy the lights went out at Paisley Park yet again. The frequency that this is happening at VPL venues over the last few seasons is becoming very tiresome for the paying public.

Preston came into this fixture with some confidence having just been beaten by the Knights the week before, they knew that they should have taken something from that game having had pushed the Knights for much of the match, but Altona was a different proposition and the Lions new that they would have to work to keep them at bay.

Altona showed why it will be a force this season with some confident play, but Preston should have taken the lead on 2 occasions but Georgievski shot weakly allowing the Magic to stay in the game.

Altona also had some chances early on and Cergovski should have also scored when he was put through by Kalmar but his effort was easily saved by Salcin in the Preston goal.

Altona had some half chances but Preston's defence stood up well to the onslaught and when Altona lost the ball in Preston's half Filipovic played Arsovski on the right flank, Arsovski then put Georgievski through on goal but his weak effort was easily saved by the Magic keeper.

With 2 minutes to go in the first half Salcin incredibly saved an acrobat shot from Kalmar from 6 metres out, and a minute later pulled of the save of the game from Tasevski from Magic to keep Preston in the game.

The second half barely got started when 10 minutes in the lights went out. 15 minutes later an announcement advised that the game was over and alternative date would be set for the reply.

Line Ups.

Altona Magic:
N.Roganovic, P.Riccobene, C.Anthopolous, S.Laurie, S.Bozinovski, K.Tasevski, P.Siveski, N.Kalmar, C.Recchia, P.Cergovski, M.Curcija

Preston Lions:
D. Salcin, M. Ladnjak, M. Miskas, Z. Popovic, C. Toleski, I. Arsovski, I. Filipovic, R. Najdovski, R. Dolevski, B. Micovski, B. Georgievski

Crowd: 1200 Unofficial
****Match abandoned due to floodlight failure.***

By Nome Risteski

Photos by Nome Risteski

Action from Magic v Lions

A big crowd was on hand to watch the action between the 2008 and 2007 VPL champions, unfortunately the floodlights failed and the contest didn't quite make it to the full ninety minutes. Bale Micovski of Preston gives chase on a Phillip Ricobene (Magic) pass before the lights blew.

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WHITTLESEA ZEBRAS

V

GREEN GULLY

GREEN MACHINE VISITS ZEBRAS

Tonight at Epping Stadium, KO 8.30pm

In the final game of round two of the 2009 Victorian Premier League, Green Gully will travel to Epping Stadium for the clash against the Whittlsea Zebras.

It wasn't until mid week that confirmation of the venue from Football Federation Victoria came through to the clubs participating in this fixture. During the off-season, the Zebras have been hit hard by off-field politics. Gone is former president and power-broker Sam Couteri, a business owner of the successful La Ionica Chickens company in Victoria. Along with Sam too, is gone a strong relationship with the FFV and the Whittlesea council, and of course a considerable amount of club finances, now diverted to another venture. The Whittlesea Zebras are working hard behind the scenes to consolidate its VPL status, and only a last minute deal involving the FFV has seen Whittlesea avoiding forfet in this round two fixture, on the back of a three-nil loss at Richmond last weekend.

As Green Gully sit comfortably near top of the table, it is with some irony the Cavaliers will go head to head this Monday night with their former striker Brandon Vassallo. Last weekend the Cavaliers hosted the Georgies with former Gully striker Campbell Banks in their line-up, but were able to walk away with a three nil win and importantly three points to open the new season. Another week, and an another ex-striker to look out for. Brandon Vassallo left Gully at the end of the 2007 season, due to commitments with his thriving electrics business and long distance travelling time to Gully from his part of Melbourne. The former Gully Junior (from Under 8's) had a stint with the Oakleigh Cannons before ending up at Whittlesea.

The Cavaliers played the Whittlesea Stallions in a pre-season friendly, a week after the Black Saturday bushfires. Green Gully donated $500 to the Red Cross before the kick-off. In that game the Cavaliers were 3-0 winners, the Zebras were completely outplayed and are up against the odds on Monday night. For the Cavaliers, the only problems revolve around the Coach David Winton's selection headache. As the Gully held a clean sheet against the Georgies, Winton had three defensive options in Ryan Ollerton, Kole Delev an former Melbourne Victory Youth player Cameron Drake out of the starting eleven.

Last season's VPL Golden Boot winner Pablo Cardozo (left) will be in action against the Zebras tonight. Ross Antoniadis (Inset) will be hoping his defence can contain him and make the most of home ground advantage.

By Markian Jaworsky

Photos by Daniel Flis

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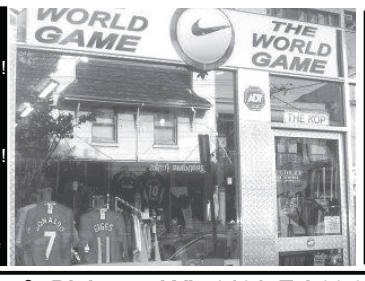

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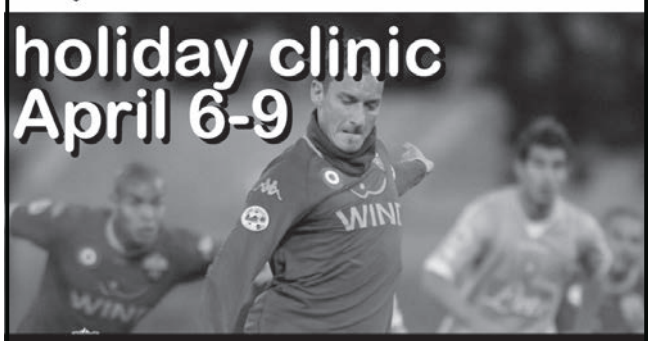

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MENS & JUNIORS

HISTORY MAKER!

The Man Who Shot Aussie Soccer To Greatness

Jimmy Mackay will always be associated with the classic goal he scored against South Korea in 1973 which took the Socceroos to the World Cup in Germany for the first time the following year. But his contribution to football in this country went well beyond that iconic strike.

He was born in Scotland in 1943 and played with Bonnyrigg Rose as a junior and then with the old Airdrieonians team in Coatbridge, east of Glasgow in 1964–65. In 1965, Frank Burin went on a recruitment trip to Europe for Croatia Melbourne which had been yo-yoing between the State League and the Division One of the Metropolitan League. Arriving in Scotland he got a list of players whose contracts had expired and promptly signed Duncan MacKay, formerly of Celtic, who had been playing with Third Lanark which was in its terminal decline. Then in Edinburgh Burin met and signed Hugh Gunn and Jimmy Mackay. All three were to play a huge part in Croatia's success in the next few years. Jimmy Mackay was a skilled midfielder with a brilliant tactical brain who could control a match. He made an immediate impact at Croatia which became the glamour team of 1965 according to the Victorian Soccer Federation Yearbook. By the end of the season it was a team of mixed nationalities, with Scots in the majority. Hammy McMeechan from Slavia was signed for a Victorian record fee of £1,200. Other newcomers were Joe Keenan, Ian Currie, Bobby McLachlan, Billy McIntyre and Brian Adlam.

In 1968 Croatia won the State League for the first time, plus the Dockerty Cup and the Ampol Cup in an extraordinary season. Jimmy Mackay was the fulcrum of the team which included the young Billy Vojtek, Horst Rau, Frank Bot, Peter Davies, Billy McIntyre, and Bill McArthur. In 1970, Rale Rasic selected Jimmy Mackay for the world tour which formed the basis of the squad which was to prepare for the 1974 World Cup in Germany. Rasic commented, 'I'll never forget Australia's 3–1 win over Greece in Athens in 1970. Not only did Mackay mark Mimis Domazos out of the game he also scored our second goal. … Mackay was certainly one of the most imaginative midfielders ever to have played in Australia … He was a football freak.'

Mackay met and married his wife Marilyn in Melbourne but his career was threatened with major disruption when Croatia was expelled from the State League after crowd trouble in a match against Hakoah at Olympic Park in 1972. In an indication of the respect in which he was held, he was offered a contract by Frank Lowy's Hakoah in Sydney. So he played in the midfield for Hakoah, helping it to top the State League ladder in both 1973 and 1974.

Jimmy Mackay. Photo: Les Shorrock collection, Deakin University Library.

The World Cup qualification began with a four-team tournament in Australia, involving the Socceroos, New Zealand, Iraq and Indonesia. Two draws against New Zealand and one with Irak, were complemented by two wins over Indonesia and one against Iraq. Mackay scored two goals in the six-nil rout of Indonesia which completed the series. In August the zone final was between Australia and Iran and three-nil home win seemed to have ensured the Socceroos's passage, but the away leg was a nail-biter after two early goals to Iran and it was a backs-to-wall defensive effort thereafter in which Mackay's control and reading of the game was vital.

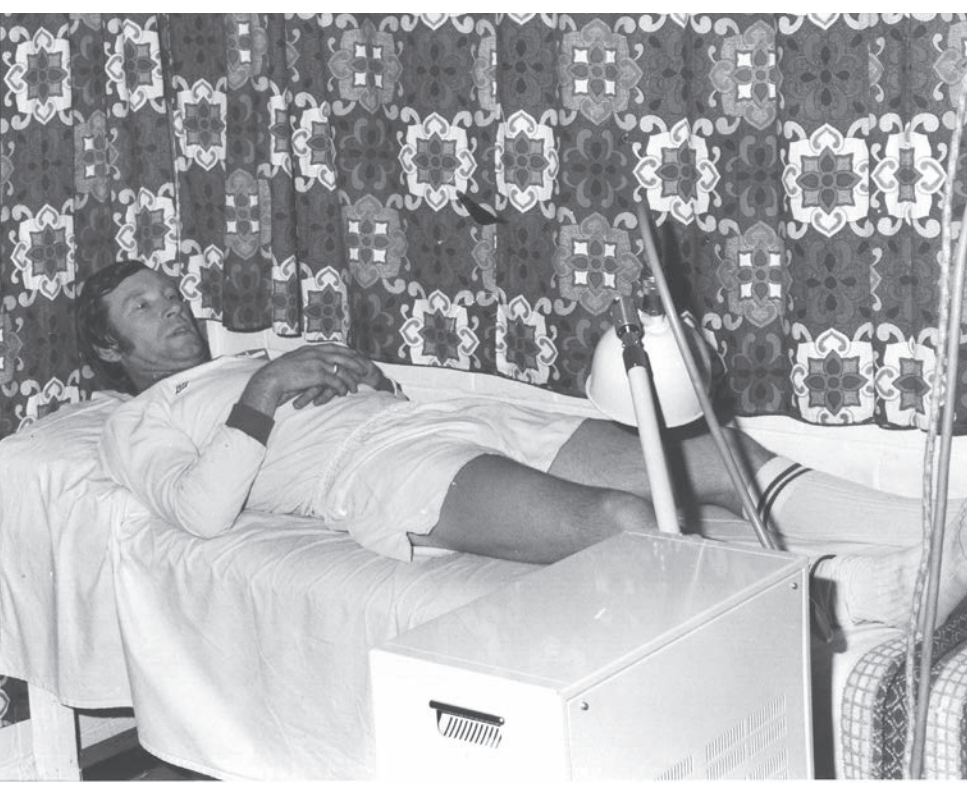
That set up the final qualification matches against South Korea. Two draws meant a third match in Hong Kong on 13 November. Seventy minutes had gone when Australia got a free kick outside the penalty area which his midfield partner, Jimmy Rooney, played back to the advancing Mackay. From about 30 metres he hit an unstoppable shot past the Korean keeper and wrote his name into history. Team-mates Doug Utjesenovic and Atti Abonyi claim that Mackay had never done anything like that before in training or in matches. But when it mattered, he did.

Mackay played in all three games in Germany, in a career which included 52 games for Australia and 25 for Victoria. He scored 5 international goals. After the World Cup he returned to Victoria and South Melbourne Hellas, where he helped the Blues to runner-up in 1975 and to become State League champion in 1976. He retired in 1977 just before the start of the National Soccer League. He was recognised in the Roll of Honour in the Australian Football Hall of Fame. His passing in 1998 saddened the whole football community, but his memory lives on.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Frank Burin, Greg Stock, Tony Brown, Ted Smith and the late Laurie Schwab in preparing this article.

Words by Roy Hay

Photos sourced by Roy Hay



Jimmy Mackay on the treatment table. Love that wallpaper.
Photo: Les Shorrock collection, Deakin University Library.

Jimmy Mackay in action for South Melbourne Hellas.

FUNNY GOINGS ON AT THE FOOTBALL

Big Brother Zooms In On Official's Decisions

The Football Federation of Australia has set up an independent match review panel (MRP) to consider incidents which occur in matches under its jurisdiction, in part to exercise its duty of care to its players by examining matters which have not been picked up by the match officials.

The FFA is concerned that a player could suffer a serious injury as a result of a challenge not spotted and sanctioned at the time by the referee.

But the tribunal also reviews the consequences of decisions by referees by determining the penalty which should apply to incidents which have been sanctioned by a red card which results in the expulsion of a player from a game.

Normally, if there are no aggravating circumstances the penalty will be one game's suspension, but the tribunal can increase this, as it did when it banned Ney Fabiano, Melbourne Victory's Brazilian striker, for nine matches. His offence was that he was alleged to have spat on an opponent.

In the recent Grand Final of the A-League, referee Matthew Breeze sent off Adelaide United striker Christiano for illegal use of his elbow in a challenge on Melbourne Victory's Rodrigo Vargas. This episode in the 10th minute of the match, changed the complexion of the game completely and had a large bearing on the outcome.

Later, at 65 minutes, Breeze sent off Victory's Socceroo striker Danny Allsopp for allegedly head-butting Robert Cornthwaite.

The two players challenged the red cards handed out to them and the MRP upheld both protests. The red cards are expunged from the players' records and neither has to face a sanction.

Matthew Breeze, the grand final referee and one of Australia's FIFA representatives, must be thoroughly disappointed by the outcome. Both of his major decisions in the match have been overturned on video evidence and the statements of the players and their representatives. In the eyes of the panel, which includes a former referee, he got both decisions wrong.

It now appears that football is going down the same misleading track as the Australian Football League, the cricket authorities, the NRL, Tennis Australia and the National Football League in the United States. The decisions of the referees or umpires on the field can now be overturned on the basis of what can be gleaned from video or data-capture technology.

People can argue that correcting manifestly unjust decisions made in the heat of the moment by the naked eye of fallible human beings is only fair to the participants in high-level professional sport in which vast sums of money, national pride and the livelihood of players may be at stake. But that is not what is occurring in many cases. All that we are doing is shifting the locus of decision-making from the person charged with controlling the game in real time and on the spot to another group outside the game who may have access to other, not necessarily better, evidence after the event.

In the case of football matches it is well known that the same incident can be shown in video replays from a number of different angles, one of which might show a clear foul, another might indicate that contact occurred after one of the participants had played the ball, and yet another would suggest that no contact at all had taken place.

Until we have instant video/technical capture available to the decision-maker on the spot, so that he or she can review an episode to see whether a mistake has been possible, the current procedures now adopted by a range of sports seem seriously flawed. They combine the worst of being wise after the event with the undermining of the referees/umpires. As a famous English referee, Pat Partridge once said, 'A referee's two greatest assets are his eyesight and his courage'. We are in the process of undermining that critical element in sport in order to pander to a false belief that what we see on television—directly from a replay or through an artefact like Hawk-eye or Snicko—is somehow better and fairer, when it is only shifting the control to outsiders. You might as well have a straw poll of viewers to decide outcomes.

Quick! Quick! With only a split second to decide and 100,000 eyes watching, was this challenge a foul with malice intent?

By Roy Hay

Photos by Big Brother

FROM MORRIS MINOR TO MAJOR

GISS Academies Go From Strength To Strength

Genova International School of Soccer (GISS) an Italian based company founded in Italy in by Italo/Australian Morris Pagniello in 2005, has seen many players through the professional football system, including some of Italy's Serie A stars.

In July 2006 the company established a partnership with AS Roma and established its sister company in Melbourne which filled the gap in Junior development.

2008 saw GISS seeds expand into Holland, Brazil and Asia. In October 2008, GISS continued its partnership with AS Roma establishing a strong base in Toronto, Canada. The 3 official bases and seeds around the globe, have placed 42 players in the highest and lower leagues over Europe through a proven system of player development and placement in the "GISS pathway". Over 15 Australian players are currently in Europe living their dreams and earning their living from football. 2009 will see another 8 GISS players who travelled to Europe last year for Italian playing tours and trial sign with professional clubs. GISS organises groups of selected U14, U16, U18 and 18+ players to play against the worlds top youth and senior clubs. The annual tours occur during the 2nd half of the year starting with the 18yrs+ players entering a pre-season Serie A competition. These are official trial games and some players are asked to stay back for further trials (see tours section www.issgenova.com).

Morris Pagniello 32yrs is an Ex Professional Footballer who played for over 10yrs in Italy, Holland, Hungary and USA, comments '' I believe that football is life for many European countries and if we are going to be able to compete against these countries or try and break into their leagues we have be prepared...and what better way to do this from home. With the right instructors, our junior development program and our career pathways project, I believe any player with a little bit of talent can go a long way. I always tell our players that if you want to live from football, you must live for football and that doesn't mean just training everyday, it means training the right way everyday to be able to compete against the worlds best. Growing up I never had anything this professional or any kind of pathway. I had to struggle my way through, beginning in the Torino Football Academy, paying my own way for two years before I was offered a professional contract. Its been very tough, but its paid off in my career and now this project is creating a market for more and more Australian players to be recognized in the world game. GISS star Theo Markelis commented "me and my family owe everything to GISS and Morris for training us and giving us an opportunity. My brother has signed 2nd division in Hungary and Morris has me signed up in Valencia, Spain". Theo has signed a six year deal, and manager Morris Pagniello has been approached by the Greek Under 18 national team and several other clubs with ludicrous offers. GISS is now looking at expanding career opportunities for female players and are in discussions with potential clubs in Europe, Canada and the USA.

Italian stallions: Francesco Totti, Ramon Turone, Bruno Conti, Morris Pagniello, and Daniele De Rossi.

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Fri 27 Mar KO 8:30PM Thomastown Devils v Westgate To Be Confirmed
Sat 28 Mar KO 3:00PM Altona City v Geelong Rangers HC Kim Res
Sat 28 Mar KO 3:00PM Brunswick City v Keilor Park Dunstan Res
Sat 28 Mar KO 3:00PM Altona East Phoenix v Ballarat Red Devils Paisley Park
Sat 28 Mar KO 3:00PM Werribee City v North Geelong Warriors Galvin Park Res
Sat 28 Mar KO 3:00PM Williamstown v Sydenham Park JT Gray Res

Round 2
Sat 4 Apr KO 3:00PM North Geelong Warriors v Williamstown Elcho Park
Sat 4 Apr KO 3:00PM Ballarat Red Devils v Werribee City Trekardo Park
Sat 4 Apr KO 3:00PM Altona East Phoenix v Keilor Park Paisley Park
Sat 4 Apr KO 3:00PM Brunswick City v Westgate Dunstan Res
Sat 4 Apr KO 3:00PM Altona City v Sydenham Park HC Kim Res
Sat 4 Apr KO 3:00PM Geelong Rangers v Thomastown Devils Myers Res

Round 3
Fri 17 Apr KO 8:30PM Thomastown Devils v Altona City To Be Confirmed
Sat 18 Apr KO 3:00PM Brunswick City v Geelong Rangers Dunstan Res
Sat 18 Apr KO 3:00PM Altona East Phoenix v Westgate Paisley Park
Sat 18 Apr KO 3:00PM Werribee City v Keilor Park Galvin Park Res
Sat 18 Apr KO 3:00PM Williamstown v Ballarat Red Devils JT Gray Res
Sat 18 Apr KO 3:00PM North Geelong Warriors v Sydenham Park Elcho Park

Round 4
Sat 25 Apr KO 3:00PM Ballarat Red Devils v North Geelong Warriors Trekardo Park
Sat 25 Apr KO 3:00PM Keilor Park v Williamstown Keilor Park Res
Sat 25 Apr KO 3:00PM Sydenham Park v Thomastown Devils Keilor Lodge Res
Sat 25 Apr KO 3:00PM Geelong Rangers v Altona East Phoenix Myers Res
Sat 25 Apr KO 3:00PM Altona City v Brunswick City HC Kim Res
Sat 25 Apr KO 7:00PM Westgate v Werribee City Ardeer Res

Round 5
Sat 2 May KO 3:00PM Brunswick City v Thomastown Devils Dunstan Res
Sat 2 May KO 3:00PM Altona East Phoenix v Altona City Paisley Park
Sat 2 May KO 3:00PM Werribee City v Geelong Rangers Galvin Park Res
Sat 2 May KO 3:00PM Williamstown v Westgate JT Gray Res
Sat 2 May KO 3:00PM North Geelong Warriors v Keilor Park Elcho Park
Sat 2 May KO 3:00PM Ballarat Red Devils v Sydenham Park Trekardo Park

Round 6
Fri 8 May KO 8:30PM Thomastown Devils v Altona East Phoenix To Be Confirmed
Sat 9 May KO 3:00PM Keilor Park v Ballarat Red Devils Keilor Park Res
Sat 9 May KO 3:00PM Sydenham Park v Brunswick City Keilor Lodge Res
Sat 9 May KO 3:00PM Geelong Rangers v Williamstown Myers Res
Sat 9 May KO 3:00PM Altona City v Werribee City HC Kim Res
Sat 9 May KO 7:00PM Westgate v North Geelong Warriors Ardeer Res

Round 7
Sat 16 May KO 3:00PM Altona East Phoenix v Brunswick City Paisley Park
Sat 16 May KO 3:00PM Werribee City v Thomastown Devils Galvin Park Res
Sat 16 May KO 3:00PM Williamstown v Altona City JT Gray Res
Sat 16 May KO 3:00PM North Geelong Warriors v Geelong Rangers Elcho Park
Sat 16 May KO 3:00PM Ballarat Red Devils v Westgate Trekardo Park
Sat 16 May KO 3:00PM Keilor Park v Sydenham Park Keilor Park Res

Round 8
Fri 22 May KO 8:30PM Thomastown Devils v Williamstown To Be Confirmed
Sat 23 May KO 3:00PM Sydenham Park v Altona East Phoenix Keilor Lodge Res
Sat 23 May KO 3:00PM Geelong Rangers v Ballarat Red Devils Myers Res
Sat 23 May KO 3:00PM Altona City v North Geelong Warriors HC Kim Res
Sat 23 May KO 3:00PM Brunswick City v Werribee City Dunstan Res
Sat 23 May KO 7:00PM Westgate v Keilor Park Ardeer Res

Round 9
Sat 30 May KO 3:00PM Werribee City v Altona East Phoenix Galvin Park Res
Sat 30 May KO 3:00PM Williamstown v Brunswick City JT Gray Res
Sat 30 May KO 3:00PM North Geelong Warriors v Thomastown Devils Elcho Park
Sat 30 May KO 3:00PM Ballarat Red Devils v Altona City Trekardo Park
Sat 30 May KO 3:00PM Keilor Park v Geelong Rangers Keilor Park Res
Sat 30 May KO 7:00PM Westgate v Sydenham Park Ardeer Res

Round 10
12 Jun KO 8:30PM Thomastown Devils v Ballarat Red Devils To Be Confirmed
13 Jun KO 3:00PM Werribee City v Sydenham Park Galvin Park Res
13 Jun KO 3:00PM Geelong Rangers v Westgate Myers Res
13 Jun KO 3:00PM Brunswick City v North Geelong Warriors Dunstan Res
13 Jun KO 3:00PM Altona East Phoenix v Williamstown Paisley Park
13 Jun KO 3:00PM Altona City v Keilor Park HC Kim Res

Round 11
Sat 20 Jun KO 3:00PM Williamstown v Werribee City JT Gray Res
Sat 20 Jun KO 3:00PM North Geelong Warriors v Altona East Phoenix Elcho Park
Sat 20 Jun KO 3:00PM Brunswick City v Ballarat Red Devils Dunstan Res
Sat 20 Jun KO 3:00PM Keilor Park v Thomastown Devils Keilor Park Res
Sat 20 Jun KO 3:00PM Sydenham Park v Geelong Rangers Keilor Lodge Res
Sat 20 Jun KO 7:00PM Westgate v Altona City Ardeer Res

Round 12
Sat 27 Jun KO 3:00PM Geelong Rangers v Altona City Myers Res
Sat 27 Jun KO 3:00PM Keilor Park v Brunswick City Keilor Park Res
Sat 27 Jun KO 3:00PM Ballarat Red Devils v Altona East Phoenix Trekardo Park
Sat 27 Jun KO 3:00PM North Geelong Warriors v Werribee City Elcho Park
Sat 27 Jun KO 3:00PM Sydenham Park v Williamstown Keilor Lodge Res
Sat 27 Jun KO 7:00PM Westgate v Thomastown Devils Ardeer Res

Round 13
Fri 3 Jul KO 8:30PM Thomastown Devils v Geelong Rangers To Be Confirmed
Sat 4 Jul KO 3:00PM Williamstown v North Geelong Warriors JT Gray Res
Sat 4 Jul KO 3:00PM Werribee City v Ballarat Red Devils Galvin Park Res
Sat 4 Jul KO 3:00PM Keilor Park v Altona East Phoenix Keilor Park Res
Sat 4 Jul KO 3:00PM Sydenham Park v Altona City Keilor Lodge Res
Sat 4 Jul KO 5:00PM Westgate v Brunswick City Ardeer Res

Round 14
Sat 11 Jul KO 3:00PM Altona City v Thomastown Devils HC Kim Res
Sat 11 Jul KO 3:00PM Geelong Rangers v Brunswick City Myers Res
Sat 11 Jul KO 3:00PM Keilor Park v Werribee City Keilor Park Res
Sat 11 Jul KO 3:00PM Ballarat Red Devils v Williamstown Trekardo Park
Sat 11 Jul KO 3:00PM Sydenham Park v North Geelong Warriors Keilor Lodge Res
Sat 11 Jul KO 7:00PM Westgate v Altona East Phoenix Ardeer Res

Round 15
Fri 17 Jul KO 8:30PM Thomastown Devils v Sydenham Park To Be Confirmed
Sat 18 Jul KO 3:00PM North Geelong Warriors v Ballarat Red Devils Elcho Park
Sat 18 Jul KO 3:00PM Williamstown v Keilor Park JT Gray Res
Sat 18 Jul KO 3:00PM Werribee City v Westgate Galvin Park Res
Sat 18 Jul KO 3:00PM Altona East Phoenix v Geelong Rangers Paisley Park
Sat 18 Jul KO 3:00PM Brunswick City v Altona City Dunstan Res

Round 16
Fri 24 Jul KO 8:30PM Thomastown Devils v Brunswick City To Be Confirmed
Sat 25 Jul KO 3:00PM Altona City v Altona East Phoenix HC Kim Res
Sat 25 Jul KO 3:00PM Geelong Rangers v Werribee City Myers Res
Sat 25 Jul KO 3:00PM Keilor Park v North Geelong Warriors Keilor Park Res
Sat 25 Jul KO 3:00PM Sydenham Park v Ballarat Red Devils Keilor Lodge Res
Sat 25 Jul KO 7:00PM Westgate v Williamstown Ardeer Res

Round 17
Sat 1 Aug KO 3:00PM Ballarat Red Devils v Keilor Park Trekardo Park
Sat 1 Aug KO 3:00PM North Geelong Warriors v Westgate Elcho Park
Sat 1 Aug KO 3:00PM Brunswick City v Sydenham Park Dunstan Res
Sat 1 Aug KO 3:00PM Williamstown v Geelong Rangers JT Gray Res
Sat 1 Aug KO 3:00PM Werribee City v Altona City Galvin Park Res
Sat 1 Aug KO 3:00PM Altona East Phoenix v Thomastown Devils Paisley Park

Round 18
Fri 7 Aug KO 8:30PM Thomastown Devils v Werribee City To Be Confirmed
Sat 8 Aug KO 3:00PM Brunswick City v Altona East Phoenix Dunstan Res
Sat 8 Aug KO 3:00PM Altona City v Williamstown HC Kim Res
Sat 8 Aug KO 3:00PM Geelong Rangers v North Geelong Warriors Myers Res
Sat 8 Aug KO 3:00PM Sydenham Park v Keilor Park Keilor Lodge Res
Sat 8 Aug KO 7:00PM Westgate v Ballarat Red Devils Ardeer Res

Round 19
Sat 15 Aug KO 3:00PM Keilor Park v Westgate Keilor Park Res
Sat 15 Aug KO 3:00PM Altona East Phoenix v Sydenham Park Paisley Park
Sat 15 Aug KO 3:00PM Ballarat Red Devils v Geelong Rangers Trekardo Park
Sat 15 Aug KO 3:00PM North Geelong Warriors v Altona City Elcho Park
Sat 15 Aug KO 3:00PM Williamstown v Thomastown Devils JT Gray Res
Sat 15 Aug KO 3:00PM Werribee City v Brunswick City Galvin Park Res

Round 20
Fri 21 Aug KO 8:30PM Thomastown Devils v North Geelong Warriors To Be Confirmed
Sat 22 Aug KO 3:00PM Altona East Phoenix v Werribee City Paisley Park
Sat 22 Aug KO 3:00PM Brunswick City v Williamstown Dunstan Res
Sat 22 Aug KO 3:00PM Altona City v Ballarat Red Devils HC Kim Res
Sat 22 Aug KO 3:00PM Geelong Rangers v Keilor Park Myers Res
Sat 22 Aug KO 3:00PM Sydenham Park v Westgate Keilor Lodge Res

Round 21
Sat 29 Aug KO 3:00PM Sydenham Park v Werribee City Keilor Lodge Res
Sat 29 Aug KO 3:00PM Ballarat Red Devils v Thomastown Devils Trekardo Park
Sat 29 Aug KO 3:00PM North Geelong Warriors v Brunswick City Elcho Park
Sat 29 Aug KO 3:00PM Williamstown v Altona East Phoenix JT Gray Res
Sat 29 Aug KO 3:00PM Keilor Park v Altona City Keilor Park Res
Sat 29 Aug KO 7:00PM Westgate v Geelong Rangers Ardeer Res

Round 22
Sat 5 Sep KO 3:00PM Werribee City v Williamstown Galvin Park Res
Sat 5 Sep KO 3:00PM Altona East Phoenix v North Geelong Warriors Paisley Park
Sat 5 Sep KO 3:00PM Ballarat Red Devils v Brunswick City Trekardo Park
Sat 5 Sep KO 3:00PM Altona City v Westgate HC Kim Res
Sat 5 Sep KO 3:00PM Geelong Rangers v Sydenham Park Myers Res
Sat 5 Sep KO 8:30PM Thomastown Devils v Keilor Park To Be Confirmed

Draw Notes:
CATCH-UP ROUNDS - 6th June 20KO & 12 September 20KO - Clubs will be notified by FFV of matches to be played on this weekend during the course of the season.

CLUBS ARE ADVISED TO VERIFY THEIR FIXTURES REGULARLY VIA RESULTS VAULT AND THE FFV WEBSITE FOR ANY CHANGES THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF THE SEASON.

RICHMOND EAGLES

1 - 0

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

EAGLES DARE TO SOAR

Cardozo Curler Kills Knights

Opening round victors Richmond and Melbourne Knights met in a keenly anticipated game at Kevin Bartlett Reserve on Friday.

Both finalists in 2008, the same fixture had produced a 1-1 draw last year, with the game at Knights Stadium taken 3-2 by the home side in a thrilling contest. Another tight battle was expected. Welcome rain had cleared, with the match kicking off on a pitch in fine condition.

There was a three minute delay only three minutes into the game whilst the South Eastern corner of the ground was cleared of red streamers strewn across the pitch in a display of support by the Melbourne Croatia Fans group. A speculative shot by Frank Lagana from thirty-five yards flew wide of the goal five mintues after play resumed, the game getting off to a flat start. George Goutzioulis went down under a challenge in the box trying to get to a cross from Michael Catalano, with referee Perry Mur dismissing his claim for a penalty.

Josh Groenewald forced a save from Peter Zois in the tenth minute, latching onto a ball centred by Greg Draper after he beat Andrew Viola in the corner. Two minutes later the action was at the other end of the park, when a long ball through the middle from Daniel Visevic saw Goutzioulis and Cameron Watson challenge for the ball in the air at the top of the penalty area. The ball spilled loose, but Goutzioulis stopped play as Watson injured a knee on landing. After several minutes of treatment the Knights midfielder was able to return to the fray.

Twenty minutes into the game a clearance by Stuart McCluskey was followed by a late tackle by Groenewald which felled the Eagles skipper and brought about an early end to his night. The incident took place less than thirty metres from where Groenewald broke the leg of Semir Sivic in July last year. The ire of the Richmond players was further raised by the referee missing the incident and not issuing a caution, with tensions between both teams rapidly escalating.

A poorly taken quick free-kick by John Fitzgerald saw Catalano receive the ball in space in the middle of the pitch, and he soon found Goutzioulis on the left side of the penalty area. Goutzioulis beat a man and got to the line before appealing for a penalty as he went down under a tackle when trying to cut the ball back, referee Mur confidently dismissing his shout. A good cross from Jamie Cumming saw Draper have a header well saved by Zois. Danny Black headed well over the bar at a corner kick as the game remained scoreless after half an hour of play.

A free kick conceded by Terry Antoniadis for a foul on Matthew Grbesa allowed Watson to take aim from thirty yards, Zois diving to save and hold the ball from the threat of the on-rushing Knights attackers. Goutzioulis again posed a threat chasing onto a ball from Catalano, Savas Ozdemir colliding with a team-mate as they tried to stop him, but the ball failed to fall kindly for a shot to be taken. The change of ends would come with the game still deadlocked.

Shortly after the restart a Erhan Karahan cross saw Catalano centre the ball from the byline, forcing Grbesa to head the ball off his line to safety. Antoniadis headed a free-kick over the bar, before Karahan was booked for a tackle on Groenewald near the half-way line. Groenwald soon went into the book himself, after a foul on Dimitri Tsiaras. In the fifty-ninth minute Draper latched onto a long clearance from Ozdemir, flicking it on beyond a defender and then cutting inside to shoot but being foiled by another great save from Zois.

A shot from Groenewald was blocked and deflected across goal, Karahan eventually clearing the danger. Substitute Nick Kalambokis found space on the right of goal for Richmond, his shot blocked but then almost scoring as the clearance stuck him and flashed just wide of the goal. Mate Dugandzic then threatened for the Knights, his shot on the run from twenty-six yards saved by Zois. A shot by Groenewald from a similar range in the seventieth minute went well wide across the face of goal.

It was a minute later that Richmond won a free-kick just outside the penalty area when Antoniadis was fouled. Richie Cardozo stepped up to the dead ball, his shot striking a body on the end of the defensive wall and looping into the net near the post with a despairing Ozdemir wrong-footed.

Kalambokis forced Ozdemir into a save with ten minutes remaining, before Zois again came to Richmond's rescue with a save from Dugandzic as he shot from the left. Melvin Becket chipped over the bar from the left after Fitzgerald had fed the ball to him following a strong run forward. The Eagles grittily hung on to their lead to the final whistle, to maintain a 100% winning start to the season. Their great start to the campaign will face another difficult hurdle next week when they face reigning champions Altona Magic away at Paisley Park.

The Knights would feel unfortunate not have taken something from the game, and will hope to bounce back against Oakleigh Cannons on Friday night. With their pitch still recovering from repairs, it will be the third of five consecutive away games for them at the start of the 2009 season.

Richmond: P.Zois, D.Black, E.Karahan, S.McCluskey (T.Antoniadis 22'), D.Tsiaras, D.Visevic (N.Kalambokis 54'), G.Goutzioulis (N.Govedarica 69'), R.Cardozo, M.Catalano, L.Kindtner, A.Viola.

Goal: Cardozo 74'

Yellow Cards: Cardozo 16' Tsiaras 24' Karahan 51'
Red Cards: None

Melbourne Knights: S.Ozdemir, J.Cumming, C.Elvin, J.Fitzgerald, M.Grbesa, C.Watson, J.Groenewald (M.Becket 80'), 10G.Draper, D.Hatzimouratis (M.Dugandzic 71'), F.Lagana, A.Kiratzoglu.

Yellow Cards: Cumming 46' Groenewald 56'
Red Cards: None

Man of the Match: Peter Zois (Richmond)
Venue: Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Crowd: 1200

The Eagles celebrate

By Mark Boric

Photos by Steve Starek

Knights keeper Savvas Ozdemir is left stranded after Richie Cardozo's looping free-kick finds its way into the back of the net. Inset: Getting ready for take off.

OAKLEIGH CANNONS

0 - 1

DANDENONG THUNDER

THUNDER STRIKES AGAIN!

Smokin' Joe Muffles Cannons

Newly promoted Premier League Club Dandenong Thunder continued its auspicious start to the season with a hard fought 1-0 victory against the Oakleigh Cannons at Jack Edwards Reserve on Friday night.

Backing up just five days after the previous Sunday's 1-0 away win against South Melbourne, the Thunder gave coach Stuart Webster a satisfying return to his old stomping ground.

Joe DiIorio became the toast of South Dandenong when his 88th minute goal sent the visiting fans home celebrating another triumphant outing in the Premier league.

The game opened at a lively tempo from both sides.

Thunder, playing with skipper Veton Korcari in the lone striker's role, worked hard defensively all over the park. Although Oakleigh had a few more options going forward, they had to wait till the 37 th minute to produce their first real attempt on goal, a half chance to striker Ricky Diaco which flew well over the bar.

Former teammates Bill Damianos and Thunder's ex-Cannon, Marcus Stergiopoulos were locked in a determined midfield battle. A Damianos free kick produced a diving save from another ex- Cannon teamate, Stuart Webster in the Thunder goal.

Young Oakleigh winger Kristopher Kioussis who was waging a battle of the teenagers with Thunder's right back Jack Hingert, then produced a shot on the turn which found the side netting in the 39th minute.

Dandenong's best chances of the first half fell to midfielder Colin Quirk whose 7th minute effort flashed across the face of goal, whilst another effort on the stroke of half time flew into the side netting.

Thunder raised the tempo of their game in the second half, threatening to find a way through the Cannon's defence down the right flank, where the pace and mobility of Hamlet Armenian, Jack Hingert and the tireless Ryan Davidson were having an impact. At the other end, Webster produced a good diving save to deny Cannon striker Jerry Karpeh.

Thunder went even closer in the 61st minute when a Stergiopoulos shot from a Hingert cutback produced a finger tip save from Cannons' keeper Adrian Cagalj.

As the second half progressed, Thunder was finishing the stronger of the two sides and Munro increased his attacking options by introducing DiIorio and left attacking midfielder Mohammad Alkasaran.

When a powerful Korcari header flew straight into the safe arms of Cagalj in the 88th minute, the game seemed destined to finish in a scoreless draw. However, in the next minute, a DiIorio header from a Stergiopoulos freekick, flew into the net past a helpless Cagalj sending the mass of Thunder fans behind the goal into raptures.

After the match, Thunder coach Munro praised the players' effort. " We put a lot of effort into the game. And Oakleigh players put a lot into the game, so there was never going to be much in it. It's a great time to score right at the death. It's very difficult even though the ref played a lot of extra time, we were still strong."

Munro told his players after the match, " you've set a precedent, a standard now over the last two weeks, now I don't expect you to drop on that standard."

Cannons coach John Anastasiadis said afterwards, " Look, it was a tough battle, for them too it was a tough game with many individual battles. Unfortunately the goal didn't come from one of those battles. It came from a free kick. Unfortunately we conceded at the wrong time, at the 88th minute so I was a bit disappointed. I can't take anything away from our team's effort. The boys put in as much effort as possible. It's a little dent in our aspirations but there's another 20 games to go."

Lineups:

Oakleigh Cannons:
Cagalj, A., Drakos, A, Rosman, F., Matkovic, D.(Rojas, A.74'), Hatzikostas, S., Damianos, B, Kioussis, K (Obradovic, B. 82'), Waterson T., Diaco, R., Karpeh, J.

Dandenong Thunder:
Webster, Stuart. Hingert, J. Osman, L., Wilford, A., Ibraimi, F., Thomas, J. (Alkasaran, M. 81'), Armenian, H., Quirk, C. (DiIorio, J. 66'), Stergiopoulos, M., Korcari, V., Davidson, R.

Scorer: DiIorio 89'
Best on Ground: Davidson R.

By George Stogiannou

Photos by Peter Kakalias

Veton Korcari and Felix Rosman come to ground on Friday night.

AUSTRALIA PFA PREMIER FOOTBALL ACADEMY

PFA Australia Easter Clinics

Join UK Academy Coach (UFEA recognised) and development specialist Lee Waddington for our Easter clinics.

Dates: April 6th & 7th
Venue: Glenroy, Melbourne
ONLY OPEN TO PFAA ACADEMY PLAYERS

Dates: April 8th & 9th
Venue: Glenroy, Melbourne
Open to all players aged between 7 –17 years old

Dates: April 14th & 15th
Venue: Cranbourne, Melbourne
Availability: bookings being taken now
Open to all players aged between 13-17 years old

Dates: April 16th & 17th
Venue: Brighton, Melbourne
Open to players aged between 7-17 years old

Register for all camps by emailing pfaa@pfaauastralia.com

Check out www.pfaaustralia.com for more details or call 03 9525 5844

Last minute match winner Joey Di Iorio is swallowed up in a sea of red and black as the Thunder fans are delirious with delight.

MacKenzie At Large

An Occasional Offering from Craig MacKenzie

Great Scot, it's another Mac

SCOTTISH defender Stuart MacDonald flies into Melbourne today to take up a contract with Division One outfit Springvale White Eagles.

The 27-year-old featured in the same Morton outfit some seasons back that boasted goalkeeper Stuart Webster, son of White Eagles coach Stan Webster.

Contact with MacDonald was made through the brother of White Eagles defender and assistant coach Billy Armour and MacDonald is highly credentialled.

He made his name at Erskine Boys Club before joining Greenock Morton in 1998 and making 34 senior appearances. He then switched to Airdrie but rejoined Morton for the 2002–03 season making 24 appearances.

MacDonald then joined Cumnock Juniors and was a regular in the Junior Scotland Squad selected from non-league players, last playing for his country on 15 November in the Stuart McIntosh Testimonial match. He also featured for Junior Scotland in last year's Isle of Man Tournament and at club level was in the Cumnock side that was beaten 2–1 by Bathgate Thistle in the 2008 Scottish Junior Cup final.

He arrives matchfit as his last game for Cumnock was on Saturday 28 February where he captained the side that overcame Maybole Juniors 5–3 on penalties in a West of Scotland Cup clash.

MacDonald is one of many new faces at White Eagles among them former Frankston Pines midfielder Domenic D'Angelo who has spent the past two seasons playing in the lower leagues in Italy.

Former White Eagles captain Tome Racunica, a right-sided wingback, has returned to the club from Noble Park United as has left-footed midfielder Gordan Mrdic.

Another midfielder, Zoran Vukas, also has made the switch from Noble Park United.

There's been an influx of Irish players from Fiztroy City, however central defender Jason Colbert suffered a cruciate ligament injury in a recent hit-out against Langwarrin and may be sidelined for some time.

But White Eagles may have struck paydirt with the signing of former Ballymena striker Darren Meade who was in the 2000–01 Milwall squad alongside Socceroo stars Lucas Neil and Tim Cahill.

The other Irish signings are defensive midfielder Declan Mahone and former Shelbourne and Waterford central midfielder Alan Mullaly.

On the goalkeeping front, Webster has signed ex-South Melbourne custodian Mladin Tosic from Kingston City and Christian Morales from Bentleigh Greens.

Midfielder James Karanicolas has followed Morales from the Greens and the good news on the injury front is that Simon Webster, who last year broke the same leg twice, played 45 minutes in a practice match against South Springvale last week and came through the game unscathed.

Webster is expected to stay with White Eagles despite interest from other clubs.

Stuart MacDonald gets the better of two Pollok opponents during this 2007 Stagecoach Super Premier League clash.

Carroll snares top Cannon

BERWICK City boss Joe Carroll is chuffed with the recent signing of central defender Adam Ewin, who made many senior appearances for Premier League powerhouse Oakleigh Cannons in the past couple of seasons.

"He's a great signing for us and he's only in his early 20s," said Carroll, who remains in the hunt for a striker but is keeping his cards close to his chest.

"I'm not going to tell you who we're after because there are guys out there doing the rounds and I don't want to add our club to the list.

"Look, if worst comes to worst I'll import a striker – even if it's from Tasmania!"

Carroll's senior squad has been further bolstered by the capture of midfielder and ex-Victorian junior representative Stefan Rudski and defender or midfielder James Ashby from Kingston City.

Former Chelsea Hajduk player Adam Jelic has overcome a bad injury and Carroll is hopeful of keeping the classy left footer fit and injury-free.

Experienced striker Nick Papadopoulos joined Berwick for the second half of the 2008 State Three South-East season and made an impact and he's another that Carroll hopes can stay injury-free this season.

"We only just missed out on promotion last year and I'm hoping that we can give it a shake this time," Carroll added.

Multicultural mix at Carrum

CARRUM United is hoping it's not a case of deja vu this season after narrowly avoiding relegation from Provisional Two South-East in 2008.

And the club hopes that its Scottish and El Salvadorian coaching mix will be the key to success with Bruce Gardiner returning to the senior coaching helm with former long-serving player Jose Ramos in charge of the reserves.

Gardiner concentrated on his role as club president last year but has wasted little time getting back into the coaching mould and will rely upon the bulk of last year's senior squad this time round.

Most of these players have been teammates for years, among them prolific scorer Mauro Cordoma, goalkeeper Micky Speranza and sweeper or midfielder Alan Bussutil.

David Corri also can play as sweeper or in midfield and his return last year from State Three South-East outfit Southern Suburbs has added quality to the side.

Two juniors who have impressed during pre-season are 16-year-old defender/midfielder Nathan Deguina and 15-year-old midfielder Michael Giarratana who has looked the goods in the reserves.

Off the field things are also looking up. The club has around 200 juniors and fielded six all-girls sides last season while this week it hopes to get positive news about a facilities upgrade grant believed to be in the region of $40,000.

Deutschland uber alles

FIFA president Sepp Blatter has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the world game rather than German, which was the other possibility.

As part of the deal, the Football Association has conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a five-year phase-in plan that would become known as 'Euro-English'.

In the first year, 's' will replace the soft 'c'. Sertainly, this will make barely literate referees jump with joy. The hard 'c' will be dropped in favour of 'k'. This should klear up konfusion, and komputer keyboards kan have one less letter. There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year when the troublesome 'ph' will be replaced with 'f'. This will make words like fotograf 20 per sent shorter.

In the third year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be expekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible.

All klub offisials will enkourage the removal of double letters which have always ben a deterent to akurate speling.

Also, al wil agre that the horibl mes of the silent 'e' in the languag is disgrasful and it should go away.

By the fourth yer fans wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing 'th' with 'z' and 'w' with 'v'.

During ze fifz yer, ze unesesary 'o' kan be dropd from vords kontaining 'ou' and after ziz fifz yer, ve vil hav a reil sensibl riten styl.

Zer vil be no mor trubl or difikultis und evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech oza. Ze drem of a united FIFA vil finali kum tru.

Und efter ze fifz yer, ve vil al be speking German lik zey vunted in ze forst plas.

BOO'S WORLD

Watching A-League based Socceroos under Pim Verbeek is giving the stupid reality/dating shows on MTV and VH1 a challenge for the title of worst things on televison.
It is truly horrible, and as long as he remains in charge the Government will have a reason to keep the Socceroos off the anti-siphoning list and prevent the torture being inflicted on the Foxtel-less masses.

Looks like Adelaide United are for sale. You wouldn't think a pissant club like that would be too expensive, so buyer interest should be high.

Australian cricket has been searching for a quality spinner since the retirement of Shane Warne. Perhaps they could take a look at Melbourne Knights' Josh Groenewald, an up and coming exponent of the leg break delivery.

The water restrictions currently in place could be eased if we were somehow able to harness the water in the river cried by rival fans over Christiano's send-off and Melbourne Victory's subsequent win in the A-League Grand Final.

The lights at Altona went out during a game again. It was prior to the seventieth minute mark, so it will probably be replayed in full. At least that is the general interpretation of the rule, but that has varied in the past when Tony Pignata wielded his discretionary powers to full effect.

Anyone have a Melway reference for To Be Confirmed Stadium? Stupid modern sponsored ground name for sure, but where is it? Whittlesea Zebras will be playing there after Round Four. The address and map reference are listed as TBC which I'm guessing is To Be Continued as the Italian Mergers Saga drags on.

The FFA took no further action over both Grand Final red cards during the week. Does this mean the end for Matthew Breeze as a top level referee? Probably not. His assistants (the referee ones, not Kevin Muscat and Eugene Galekovic) will probably shoulder the blame for the errors.

Breaking news has the NRL having to change their 2009 advertising campaign after Brett Stewart, who features prominently, was investigated by police over an alleged sexual assault. I know the AFL filmed their ad at Bob Jane Stadium, which has also been used for an A-League ad in the past. When will the Victorian Premier League get its own promotional ad? An Andy Vargas free-kick curling into the top corner. Kosta Avramovski keeping rowdy fans in line. The full gallery of nut vendors. Perry Mur waving play on. Dandenong Thunder fans kicking advertising signs inside out. The more people that can be exposed to the colour and passion of our local game, the better!

IN NAME AND NATURE: Thunder fans are making their mark in the VPL. Photo: George Stogiannou

KATSA'S KORNER

With George Katsamboukas

The A-League continues to take out this weeks headlines where..
The Powerbrokers of the FFA, dressed to the max in their pin stripe suits, decided to review the A-League Grand Final, with Latte's and Canapes and mutli remote controls, with these powerbrokers being a touch concerned with what they described as "Melees and Brawls" during the big match.

I was wondering if they watched the same game as me, as my roving eye hardly spotted anything that resembled a brawl.

Perhaps it's my upbringing in Oakleigh compared to theirs at Australia's finest Private Schools, where a "brawl" involved fists kicks, and on a bad night, knives.

Tell me you guys are joking because if you are not, this great game of ours will soon be played out of Ladies Hairdressing Salons.

Not that I have anything against Ladies Hair Dressing Salons, as what walks in there walks out considerably better looking afterward!

Still on the A-League Grand Final, common sense prevailed when another group of A-League Powerbrokers, who are more in touch with the Game, cancelled out the Yellow Tickets handed out to Christiano and Alsopp.

Mathew Breeze and his Sidekick, Mathew Cream who acted as assistant Man In Yellow for the Grand Final remain unrepentant though and its business as usual for them after their questionable performance.

Punters read and weep at Mathew Breeze's comments about the Grand Final:

"I have no regrets about what happened because on Monday I go to Shanghai (along with fellow Australian match officials Cream and Jason Power) to referee the Asian Champions League game (between Shanghai Shenhua and Singapore Armed Forces) and then the week after that it's North Korea for a World Cup qualifier against the UAE. I have goals in the next 19 months and it would be detrimental to achieving those goals if I were to dwell on that.
On wards and forward he will march, where his sub standard efforts at the local level will now be rewarded with overseas gigs! That's why Australia is called the Lucky Country.

Back to the local scene where Jacks place on Friday night was buzzing.

Great crowd, great atmosphere and one would have thought that it was a Thunder Home Match with the large numbers of Thunder supporters on hand.

Great start to the season from Thunder, winning two from two.

Over to Richmond, who entertained the Melbourne Knights.From what I am told there were a few willing challenges and three players stretchered off. Richmond is also two from two.

Over the West Gate Bridge we go, where Murphy's Law came into effect once again, with a Foxtel Cup Game being disrupted due to power failure. At the 60th minute of the Altona Magic Vs Preston Match, with the score locked at 0-0, lights out and nobody was home. The House of Darebin will now decide the outcome.

Would you like fries with that?

Welcome aboard to Craig McKenzie's new Column in Goal Weekly, he provides some great insight into South East Clubs.

Over to The USA we go where one punter took Emergency 911 calls to another level.
US authorities say a Florida woman phoned 911 three times after McDonald's employees told her they were out of Chicken McNuggets.
According to a police report, 27-year-old Fort Pierce resident Latreasa L. Goodman told authorities she paid for a 10-piece last week but was later informed the restaurant had run out.
She said employees refused to give her a refund, saying all sales were final. A cashier told police she offered Goodman a larger portion of different food for the same price, but Goodman became irate. Police say Goodman was cited on a misuse of 911 charge.
"This is an emergency. If I would have known they didn't have McNuggets, I wouldn't have given my money, and now she wants to give me a McDouble, but I don't want one," Goodman told police. "This is an emergency."
Only in America!

Till next week…..

This is Katsa – 700 Games – Hard Games!

And remember, there is no such thing as a Bad Dim Sim!

Coach Toll

Last Year	This Year
0 - 2	0 - 2
Outs Weeks	Outs Weeks

FOXTEL CUP
The Victorian Football Show
Every Wednesday C31 8pm

The Green Gully Football Show
Every Saturday C31 10.30am

FOX SPORTS

EPL
Sat Mar 14 Manchester United v Liverpool
11.40 pm Fox Sports 2
Sun Mar 15 Arsenal v Blackburn
1.55 am Fox Sports 2
Sun Mar 15 Bolton v Fulham
1.55 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 15 Hull v Newcastle
1.55 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 15 Middlesbrough v Portsmouth
1.55 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 15 Everton v Stoke
1.55 am Viewers Choice
Mon Mar 16 Chelsea v Manchester City
12.25 am Fox Sports 1
Mon Mar 16 Aston Villa v Tottenham
2.55 am Fox Sports 1
MOn Mar 17 West Ham v West Brom
6.55 am Fox Sports 3

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Wednesday 11 March
Liverpool v Real Madrid 6.45 am LIVE ESPN/SBS
Juventus v Chelsea 8.00 pm DELAY ESPN

Thursday 12 March
Man Utd v Inter Milan 6.45 am LIVE ESPN/SBS
Roma v Arsenal 10.00 pm DELAY ESPN

SETANTA SPORTS

Tuesday 10th March
1:00am Eredivisie **Den Haag vs Ajax**
4:15am Ligue 1 **Lille vs Lyon**
6:30am Serie A **Napoli vs Lazio**
11:00am Bundesliga 1899 **Hoffenheim vs Werder Bremen**
4:15pm Serie A **Chievo vs Cagliari**

Wednesday 11th March
8:30pm Barca TV: La Liga **Barcelona vs Atletico Bilbao**

Thursday 12th March
12:00pm Copa Libertadores **Boyaca Chico vs Gremio** LIVE

Friday 13th March
3:45am UEFA Cup **Hamburg vs Galatasaray** LIVE
6:30am UEFA Cup **Udinese vs Zenit St Petersberg** LIVE
4:45pm MUTV: UCL **Man Utd vs Inter Milan**

Saturday 14th March
0:15am CHTV: UCL **Juventus vs Chelsea**
6:30am Bundesliga **Frankfurt vs 1899 Hoffenheim** LIVE
10:30pm SPL **Hibernian vs Hearts** LIVE

Sunday 15th March
5:15pm Bundesliga **Bochum vs Bayern Munich**
7:00pm Ligue 1 **Bordeaux vs Nice**
10:30pm Eredivisie **Feyenord vs PSV** LIVE

Monday 16th March
4:00am Scottish League Cup Final **Rangers vs Celtic**
7:00am Ligue 1 **PSG vs Marseille** LIVE

Futsal: The Great Skill Developer

Futsal (the International 5-a-side Indoor Game) is the only version of indoor soccer sanctioned by the games world governing body FIFA, (Federation Internationale de Football Association). FIFA are responsible for organising the Futsal World Championship™, for which National teams from all around the world compete in. In fact, it is the futsal equivalent of its more illustrious outdoor tournament, the FIFA World Cup™.

In Australia futsal is governed by the FFA (Football Federation of Australia) and is Australia's fastest growing sport.

The game is a great skill developer for people of all ages, especially youngsters, as futsal is played using a special low bounce ball, which, encourages players to develop skills instead of using the bounce of the ball to manipulate it. Those who play futsal improve their coordination, sharpen their reflexes and improve their decision making under pressure.

With a 4 second restart rule, small playing area and unlimited substitutions the game is designed as an excitingly fast game with non-stop action, as such the game significantly increases a players speed of play. Also playing within an area bounded by a touch line all around the court, further encourages players to keep the ball in play instead of relying on walls or nets, as often used in other versions of indoor soccer.

The basic principles like passing, shooting, and running into space are essential to master the game and should be emphasised early in a player's development. Due to the fact that fewer players take part in each game, each player gets more opportunities to be involved, thereby lessening any chance of them getting disinterested in contrast to outdoor 11 a side soccer.

The benefits of playing futsal as mentioned above together with the fact that the ages of 8 - 14 years is a crucial phase of a child's life, further validates the widespread belief that futsal is very effective in developing correct soccer techniques in children especially at a young age.

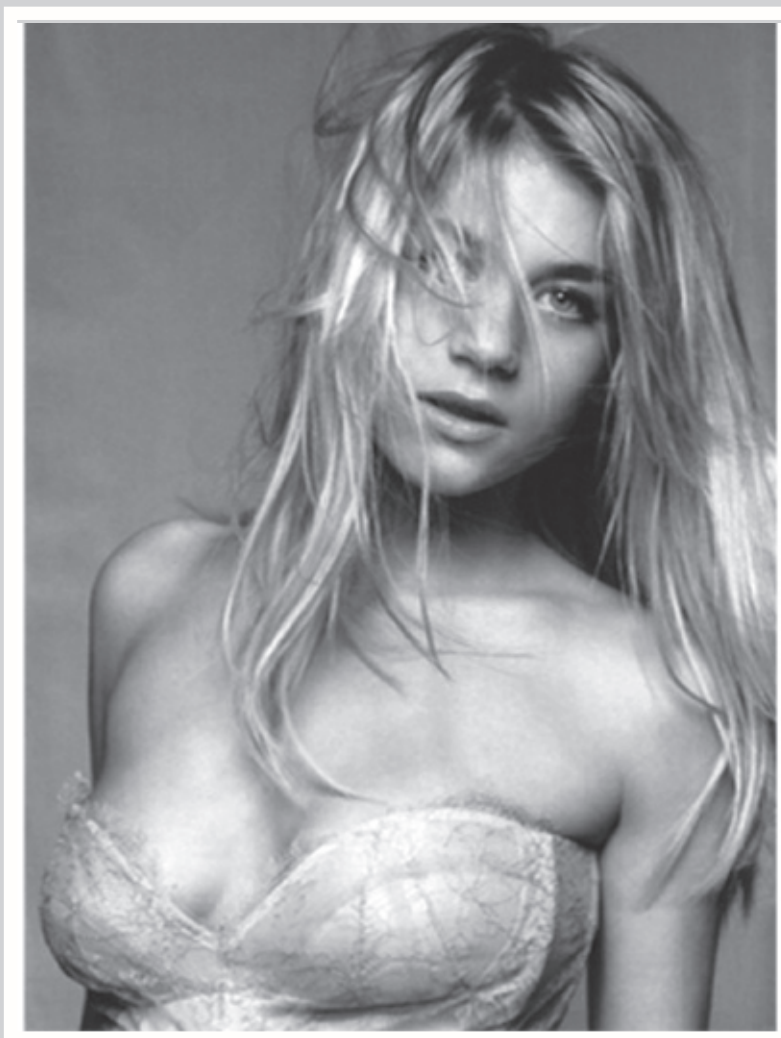
Great soccer players including Pele, Ronaldinho, Robinho, Ronaldo among many other international football superstars all grew up playing futsal on the many futsal courts foundthroughout Brazil and credit futsal for many of the skills they have perfected.

So why not contact 'Futsal Super5s' today and give futsal a go?

By Marko Barisic

Futsal

WAG OF THE WEEK



Melanie Slade Age: 21
Insignificant other: Arsenal Winger, Theo Walcott

FOOTBALL QUOTES

'You can only do as well as what you have done' - **BRYAN ROBSON**

'Football's all about 90 minutes' - **GLENN HODDLE**

'It feels like winning the cup final, if that's what it feels like.' **- GRAHAM HAWKINS**

'If you stand still there is only one way to go, and that's backwards.' - **PETER SHILTON**

'You only get one opportunity of an England debut' **- ALAN SHEARER**

'Both sets of defenders are doing well for Deportivo' - **MICK MARTIN**

'The championship is the carrot at the end of the championship' **- TONY COTTEE**

'That was in the past - we're in the future now' - **DAVID BECKHAM**

'It was a game of two halves, literally.' - **CHRIS POWELL**

'It's a no-win game for us. Although I suppose we can win by winning.' - **GARY DOHERTY**

'I was both surprised and delighted to take the armband for both legs.' - **GARY O'NEIL**

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CAMPBELLTOWN WINS FAIRMONT HOMES CUP

On Friday 20th February Campbelltown City Red Devils played out of their skins in their 3-0 victory to beat front-runners MetroStars in the Grand Final of the 2009 Fairmont Homes Summer Night Series at the Marden Sports Complex.

Spectators were witness to a display of face-paced, top quality football from both of the eastern suburbs neighbours, the Red Devils capitalising on their opportunities with three great goals coming from Stanko Zilic, new signing Michael Paleka and classy midfielder Dominic Signoriello.

The annual competition is held in the month of February where 8 invitational teams compete in two groups with 2 games being played every Wednesday and Friday evenings. This years competitors were hosts Adelaide Blue Eagles, Campbelltown City, newly promoted Super League team Western Strikers and State League Top Five trophy winners West Adelaide in Group A; and MetroStars, Para Hills Knights, Premier League competitors Cumberland United and State League Club NAB in Group B. The semi finals saw Campbelltown taking out the Group A title over Para Hills Knights with a strong 2-0 win and MetroStars coming away with a 3-0 win over Blue Eagles In the Group A competition in a scoreless game that went to penalties, with Stars keeper Daniel Godley making 3 Schwarzer-like saves to give his side the outright victory.

Throughout the competition MetroStars coached by Michael Barnett looked the team to beat, the nucleus of the 2008 squad being retained and their defence being bolstered by new signing Adam Van Dommele (ex-Adelaide United). But Campbelltown City made their intent known from the start of the final, a tad lucky they were not two or three goals down within the first 10 minutes as MetroStars squandered numerous scoring opportunities in a flurry of missed chances by their forwards in front of goal. Rocky Aloisi's Red Devils then settled down to produce some great football, their one-twos and passages of play forward finding their men and at times, dazing the normally rock-solid back line of MetroStars. The first goal came early in the game Zilic scoring with a 25m shot that was hit low and hard leaving Stars keeper Godley with no chance. At the 20th minute mark, a freekick taken by the Devils captain Simon Catanzaro - a deadball specialist found the head of Paleka, the newcomer making no mistake pounding the back of the net for the Devils second. Campbelltown's new signing Vas Parhas (Cumberland United) and promoted young Devil Peter Sapa looked exciting prospects for the club this season, their strength in the back making a big impact on the game. Triple Sergio Melta Medal winner Simon Catanzaro led by example with a brilliant display of his expertise in the midfield, instigating many runs forward and executing pin point passes to his men up front; Trimboli and Paleka. Although the match was quite an even affair, ebbing and flowing throughout the 90 minutes, Campbelltown were more effective with the ball and their passing. MetroStars did get themselves back into the game at one stage, luck not being on the side of strikers Michael Mattriciani and Scott Tunbridge as they were unable to convert chances that were presented, finding the post and Devils keeper Scalzi hard to beat. In the second half MetroStars again tried to peg back the 2 goal deficit, but missed opportunities were again their downfall, with sSome wayward passing and a steadfast Devil's backline led by staunch defender Michael D'Alosio all standing in their way. Campbelltown then put the nail in the coffin late in the second half with their third goal coming from dynamic wingman Dominic Signoriello taking a solo run down the left side past three MetroStars players finishing with a left footed shot that drilled past Godley in the 81st minute, much to the delight of the Campbelltown City faithful.

2009 Red Devils Captain Simon Catanzaro was delighted with the title win, "I was proud to lead the club to its first trophy up for grabs in 2009 against South Australia's strongest team. We rode our luck in the first 5 minutes then took our chances the rest of the game. This will be a stepping stone for the club to have its most successful season in recent time. Personally I have had some very good results over the past few seasons, picking up the Sergio Melta Medal for Super League's Player of the Year in 2005, 2006 and 2008 and am very grateful. But what I really want is some silverware to put into the trophy cabinet of one of South Australia's biggest clubs Campbelltown City.

By Nat Adamopoulos

In Adelaide

GALEKOVIC VOTED REDS' TOP PLAYER

Lavish Awards Ceremony Concludes Adelaide's Season

Adelaide United FC goalkeeper Eugene Galekovic has capped off an exceptional 12 months by taking home the prestigious Aurelio Vidmar Club Champion Award at The Reds' end of season Presentation Night.

Galekovic taking out the night's big award was a popular choice among the crowd at the club's night of glitz and glamour, the keeper having a standout year which included 10 clean sheets and 82 saves in the Hyundai A-League 2008/09 Season, plus six clean sheets in United's historic 2008 AFC Champions League campaign.

The 27 year old also captured the Player's Player Award, which is an award voted on by the players to the player who has consistently been the most valuable on the field and has continually set high standards for his team mates, capping off a big night for the keeper.

"It's great to be honoured by the players and to be the club champion but in the end you want to win team trophies and hopefully next year we can win the championship," Galekovic said.

"It was definitely a surprise. You just come here for a good night and if you win an award it's a bonus. To win two awards is something special and I'm really honoured to be a part of it."

Galekovic, who was Melbourne Victory's second choice keeper before joining Adelaide United midway through the 2007/08 season, made numerous world class saves throughout the season, playing a major part in the Reds' success, his performances earning him a Qantas Socceroos call up.

"18 months ago I was in Melbourne and sitting on the bench as the second keeper. To come to Adelaide and get a new lease of life, I love it here and hopefully I will be here for a long time to come because I love the club and the players are fantastic," Galekovic said.

Other award winners on the night included hard working midfielder Fabian Barbiero, who was named Best Team Man, while Scott Jamieson added to his Hyundai A-League Rising Star Award with the club's Rising Star accolade. Michael Marrone, who was recently signed to The Reds' Hyundai A-League squad, and Di Alagich, took out the Most Valuable Player for United's National Youth League and Westfield W-League teams respectively.

The night celebrated and concluded what has been a momentous year for Adelaide United after their conquests in the Hyundai A-League, AFC Champions League and FIFA Club World Cup, The Reds' senior squad now taking leave before resuming pre season training in mid April.

Player's Player
Eugene Galekovic
(Voted by his team mates to be consistently the most valuable player on the park, set standards on and off the park that all players in the team aspire to and best exemplify their ideal type of player)

Best Team Man
Fabian Barbiero
(Voted by the coaches as a player who exemplifies, on and off the park, the culture, values and morals that all members of the squad can aspire to, has shown themselves to consistently put their needs second to that of the team and has never complained about making a sacrifice)

Rising Star
Scott Jamieson
(A young player voted by the coaches to have made a significant impact over the season, demonstrated the greatest growth in their development as a professional player and promises the greatest potential growth as a professional player)

Most Valuable Player – National Youth League
Michael Marrone
(The player who consistently made a significant and positive difference to the team's performance during the games played and portrayed a totally professional attitude)

Most Valuable Player – Westfield Women's League
Di Alagich
(The player who consistently made a significant and positive difference to the team's performance during the games played and portrayed a totally professional attitude)

By Nat Adamopoulos

Photos by Adam Butler

Eugene Galekovic in action for the Reds

SYDNEY UNITED TAKES EARLY COMMAND

Tigers Fall Back To Earth After Olympic Defeat

Ante Milicic's Sydney United are the only team on six points after two rounds of the NSW Premier League, following up last week's win at Blacktown with a victory over Bankstown City by a single goal.

The Sydney Tigers came back down to earth after their 5-1 win last week with a 2-1 loss to Sydney Olympic, while the West Sydney Berries could only manage a 2-2 draw with Penrith-Nepean United.

Sutherland and Blacktown played out a scoreless draw at Seymour Shaw, while defending champions Wollongong FC pulled off a sensational comeback against competition newcomers Bonnyrigg, coming back from 2-0 and a man down to win 3-2.

Marconi 1-1 Manly United

Despite playing against ten men for more than half the game, hosts Marconi were unable to overcome a stubborn Manly United side at Bossley Park on Saturday evening.

The visitors had the better of the early exchanges, with the strike pairing of Robbie Cattanach and Josh Sama proving difficult for a young Marconi defence to master. But the wind was taken out of Manly's sails somewhat when influential English midfielder Craig Midgley pulled up with a hamstring injury after only a few minutes, to be replaced by Michael Lloyd-Green.

Marconi's Ben Vidaic had the first real chance on 11 minutes, outpacing the 37-year-old Spencer Prior but having his eventual shot smothered by Manly keeper Brad Swancott, who was to have a superb evening. Four minutes later, Cattanach was released on the left by Scott Thomas, but could not find the net from a tight angle.

Cattanach did indeed find his mark two minutes later, however. After a defensive error in the Marconi area, the Manly frontman displayed fine close control to swivel past two Marconi players and fire a left-footed shot in off the post.

Marconi slowly made their way into the game, with Vidaic's pace troubling the visitors' defence. On 28 minutes, the former Sydney FC striker turned Joel Grenell in the area but volleyed wide; a minute later, he was released cleverly by Alex Canak and bundled over in the area by the "last man", Manly fullback Luke Reading. A penalty was given, and Reading was rather harshly dismissed.

Nahuel Arrarte confidently tucked away the spot-kick, and Marconi were now odds-on to post their second successive win.

Nevertheless, although they had the better of play, the home side failed to create many clear chances before the break, and indeed James Chronopoulos had to dive smartly to his left on 35 minutes to prevent Sama from restoring Manly's lead with a header from Joey Schirripa's free kick.

The second period produced a fresh Marconi onslaught, with Arrarte and Ivorian teenager Kader Toure combining nicely on the right to produce a chance for Erick Anabalon, which was spurned. Soon afterwards, Vidaic was clean through on goal, but his outside-of-the-foot shot was saved splendidly by Swancott.

After a half-chance for Schirripa at the other end, the Marconi assault continued. Toure and Canak both went close just before the hour, and Vidaic squandered two excellent chances just after it. It was one-way traffic.

FNSW RD 2 RESULTS

	G	W	D	L	F	A	GD	P
1 Sydney United	2	2	0	0	4	0	4	6
2 West Sydney Berries	2	1	1	0	5	3	2	4
3 Marconi Stallions	2	1	1	0	3	1	2	4
4 Sydney Tigers	2	1	0	1	6	3	3	3
5 Wollongong FC	2	1	0	1	3	3	0	3
6 Bankstown City	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	3
7 Sydney Olympic	2	1	0	1	3	4	-1	3
8 Manly United FC	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	2
9 Sutherland Sharks	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
10 Penrith Nep Utd	2	0	1	1	2	4	-2	1
11 Blacktown City	2	0	1	1	0	3	-3	1

TELECHOICE PREMIER LEAGUE: ROUND 2: FIRST GRADE: Sydney United 1 (Luka Glavas 65m) Bankstown City 0, Wollongong FC 3 (Ilija Prenzoski 51/68m pen Samet Kaynak 72m) Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2 (Eric Nyamekye x 1 Almir Dizdaric x 1), Sydney Olympic 2 (Xavier Forsberg 16m Matthew Mayora 35m) Sydney Tigers 1 (Own goal 3m). GRADE 20: Sydney United 2 Bankstown City 2, Wollongong FC 0 Bonnyrigg White Eagles 0, Sydney Olympic 0 Sydney Tigers 4. GRADE 18: Sydney United 1 Bankstown City 2, Wollongong FC 1 Bonnyrigg White Eagles 0, Sydney Olympic 3 Sydney Tigers 2.

By Mike Salter

In Sydney

CHANGES APLENTY AS NSWPL KICKS OFF

Okon To Coach Tigers, Wollongong Saved At The Death

The TeleChoice NSW Premier League kicks off for 2009 on March 1, with several clubs under new coaches, and a couple sporting new names as well.

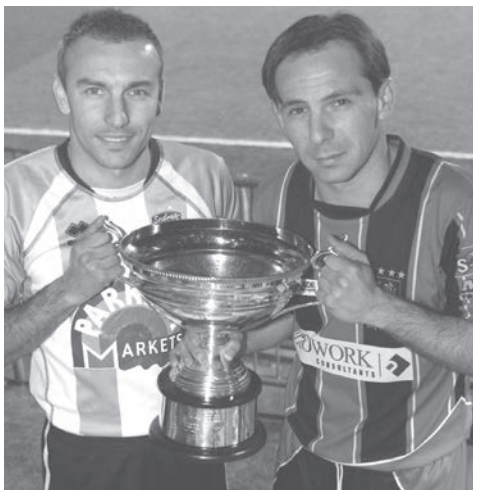
Last year's champions **Wollongong FC** have endured a turbulent off-season, during which the club endured a financial collapse which threatened its continued participation in the competition. The Illawarra community rallied around the club, however, and a new entity, the Wollongong Community Football Club, will be taking part in the 2009 NSW Premier League. Last year's assistant coach Tony Pace will be in charge, and although the men from the south have lost talismanic striker Osagie Ederaro and key midfielder Michael Hawrysiuk, they have enough experience and talent in their ranks to mount a decent challenge. Nevertheless, the motivational gifts of long-time coach John Turner will be missed.

Wollongong's opponents in last year's grand final, the **Sutherland Sharks**, look a diminished unit. With Pedj Bojic and Brendan Gan making the move to the A-League successfully, they have been deprived of their two brightest stars of last season, although prolific striker Brad Boardman is still wearing the sky blue of the Sharks. Influential winger Shane Lyons has also departed, as has goalkeeper Phil Zabaks, a revelation last season, and coach Brian Brown, who deserved such credit for developing the Sharks into such an effective team last term. The news is not all bad, however; many of last year's impressive performers have been retained, including Scottish midfielder Neil Jablonski, speedy right-back Mike Katz, and promising young striker Matthew Hall.

If there is a team to beat this season, it is surely **Sydney Olympic**. Under NSWPL legend Aytek Genc, who enjoyed huge success with Blacktown City, Olympic have held on to many of their prized assets from last season, and have added a formidable new weapon in lightning-quick striker Tolgay Ozbey, who will be keen to put the disappointment of last season's lean spell with Marconi behind him. Ozbey has been scoring for fun in pre-season, and Olympic have looked an imposing prospect overall. On the minus side, they will be without Shannon Cole, whose free kicks and scything left-wing runs were such a feature of the side last season.

The **Sydney Tigers** – formerly APIA-Leichhardt – will be at a new ground this season, under a distinguished new coach. Muddy Lambert Park has been abandoned in favour of the grandeur of Leichhardt Oval, and former Socceroo captain Paul Okon will make his managerial bow in the NSW Premier League. The squad at his disposal is not short of talent, although Robert Younis, APIA's star of last season, is a serious loss. The arrival of Shane Lyons from Sutherland and the Musumeci brothers from Olympic should ensure plenty of penetration out wide, however.

Sydney United have another former Socceroo taking over the coaching reins in Ante Milicic, and the former NSL stalwart will be appearing at the point of the attack as well. With talents such as Petar Markovic and Glen Trifiro also in the mix, the Croatian club will be a difficult opponent for anyone. As will Bankstown City, who welcome back Robbie Mileski and Ibrahim Haydar after their exploits with the Sydney FC youth team, and Tallan Martin after his unhappy season with Marconi. The Macedonian club will be expecting to finish in the top five this time around.



The skippers from Sydney Olympic (Peter Zorbas) and Bankstown City Lions (Zlatko Joseski) as they prepared for battle for last season's NSW Grand Final.

Fallen giants **Marconi** and **Blacktown** look unlikely to resurrect their fortunes in 2009. Marconi have made one or two interesting signings, including Iraqi international Ali Abbas and ex-Sydney FC striker Ben Vidaic, but their other acquisitions, mainly from the NSW second tier, do not inspire great confidence. As for Blacktown, they have recalled some aging former heroes from Marconi, but the loss of such talents as Brian Vanega and Ken Chun does not augur well for the season ahead.

Bonnyrigg White Eagles will provide an intriguing addition to the league. The Serbian-backed club have been utterly dominant in the second division (the Winter Super League) for the last two seasons, and with several stars retained, and experienced midfielders Tayfun Devrimol and Milorad Simonovic added to the ranks, they will provide a stiff challenge to the top teams in 2009.

The consistent **Manly United** side will be respected once again, and young striker Josh Sama will provide a useful new option up front, but several of the more consistent performers of last season have been released, and Phil Moss's men could struggle to reproduce their form of 2008. The competition's other two teams, Penrith-Nepean United and the West Sydney Berries, look unlikely to challenge for honours in 2009.

FNSW RD 1 RESULTS

TELECHOICE PREMIER LEAGUE: Round 1: FIRST GRADE: Bonnyrigg White Eagles 1 (Almir Dizdaric 1m) Sydney Tigers 5 (Stefan Donevski 45m Marino Musumeci 59m Jamie McMaster 65/67/81m), Manly United FC 0 Sutherland Sharks 0, Bankstown City FC 1 (Ibrahim Haydar 62m) Wollongong FC 0, Marconi Stallions 2 (Ali Al-Hilfi 26m Alexander Canak 74m) Penrith Nepean United 0, Blacktown City Demons 0 Sydney United 3 (Luka Glavas 13/72m Mitchell Thompson 45m), Sydney Olympic 1 (Tolgay Ozbey 60m) West Sydney Berries 3 (Aheleas Kotsopoulos 7m Liam Austin 44m Dimitri Zakilas 61m).

By Mike Salter

Photos by FNSW

SEASON OPENS IN QUEENSLAND

Bundaberg Spirit 0 - Sunshine Coast FC 4 (Tyson Holmes 18', Shaun Blackman 39', Scott Rocker 42', Jai Cross 45')
Bundaberg is hoping to record a vast improvement this season after finishing in last place in 2008 and were given a hard task first up, facing the reigning Premiers. Bundaberg were without a host of key players with inspirational captain Brett Kitching injured and star Solomon Islands recruits James Naka and Joe Luwi. The Spirit looked to play on the counter and were faring well against Sunshine Coast before Tyson Holmes broke through the defence to give the reigning Premiers the lead. Goal machine Shaun Blackman continued his fearsome form into this season by taking the second before Scott Rocker and Jai Cross put the result beyond doubt just before half time.

NQ Razorbacks 2 (Lee Mayberry 16', Jake Navarro 75') - Logan United 1 (Reggie Davani 4')
NQ Razorbacks took on the new look Logan United with both sides looking to get off to a winning start in their quest to make the finals. Logan's star signing, PNG International Reggie Davani, made the best possible start putting his side ahead with a good effort only four minutes in. The Razorbacks were spurred into action putting Logan's defence under sustained pressure before defender Lee Mayberry equalised in the 16th minute. The remainder of the match saw a scrappy battle develop before Jake Navarro capitalised on some good work by his teammates to take all the points in the 75th minute.

Brisbane Strikers 5 (Luke Morley 12', Adam Webber 28', 48' 55', Gareth Musson 75') - Queensland Academy of Sport 1 (Josh McVey 62')
The Strikers began the season strongly, making their vast experience count against the young QAS side at Perry Park. Fielding a side where over half the players possessed NSL experience the Strikers quickly established their superiority dominating play during the opening period. Luke Morley struck first for Brisbane before Adam Webber put the youngsters to the sword bagging a hat-trick in a half-hour sequence. QAS continued to fight throughout the match and their efforts were rewarded when striker Josh McVey pulled one back at 62 minutes.

FNQ Bulls 1 (Steven Cater) - Capricorn Cougars 2 (Tristan Fraser, Michael Cay)
Mareeba was the venue as FNQ Bulls played their inaugural QSL match against Capricorn Cougars. The Bulls put in a spirited display displaying impressive team wide commitment that bodes well for their chances this season. Capricorn made their quality tell in the end, taking the three points thanks to a goal from star player Michael Cay.

Sunday 8th March 6pm - Olympic FC vs Redlands City Devils
The local derby between Brisbane rivals Olympic FC and Redlands City Devils is looking to be the most exciting of the round. The two sides finished fourth and fifth respectively in 2008, with each team recording an impressive home win against the other. This season the encounters are expected to be much closer, and Redlands City Devils Coach Peter Bannon believes this is because of the stronger nature of the 2009 competition.
"For us this year, the advantage we have is that we have a much larger squad, but overall, with the inclusion of the Under 21s competition, all sides will have more depth. It will definitely be a much stronger competition than last year".
Olympic FC Coach Bobby Hamilton said his team was in a similar situation.

"I think our squad this year is that little bit stronger, and with a lot more depth. Lack of depth was our problem last year"

BYE - Whitsunday Miners

QSL STANDINGS

	G	W	D	L	F	A	GD	P
1 Brisbane Strikers	1	1	0	0	5	1	4	3
2 Sunshine Coast FC	1	1	0	0	4	0	4	3
3 Capricorn Cougars	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	3
4 NQ Razorbacks	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	3
5 Queensland AIS	1	0	0	1	1	5	-4	0
6 Bundaberg Spirit	1	0	0	1	0	4	-4	0
7 FNQ Bulls	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0
8 Logan United FC	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0
9 Olympic FC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10 Redlands C Devils	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11 Whitsunday Miners	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

By Jarrod Ellis
In Bundaberg

SUMMER CUP HEATS UP!

Clarence United and Tilford Zebras in Cup Final

Clarence United are in the southern Tasmanian Summer Cup Final on 9 March for the first time in the club's history.

They will meet the holders, Tilford Zebras, who reached the final by virtue of having scored one goal more than South Hobart.

Zebras and South Hobart both had a goal-difference of plus 6, but the Zebras' 6-0 win over New Town Eagles meant they had scored one goal more than South Hobart.

South Hobart threw away the chance of playing in the final when they were held to a goalless draw by Hobart Olympic, who then earned the bonus point by winning the resulting penalty shoot-out 4-2.

Clarence dominated their game against University and ran out 3-0 winners, but only after a scoreless opening half.

In the second period, atrocious defending by University gifted the match to Clarence, two of the goals coming from set-pieces.

Luke Cripps netted the first following a corner, but he knew little about it, the ball deflecting off him and into the net.

Julian McMahon headed the second from a high, looping cross from the left by Ben Hamlett, while Ben Parker forced Ben Phillips's corner into the net for the third.

Clarence keeper Michael Moschogianis touched the ball only five times during the course of the game and two of those touches were from goal-kicks.

Summer Cup finalists Clarence United...the starting XI for the game against University.

South Hobart and Hobart Olympic drew 0-0, although South's Shae Hickey and Hugh Ludford both hit the woodwork.

Olympic's goalkeeper, Dmitri Nester, was the hero of the penalty shoot-out, scoring from a spot-kick himself and saving penalties from South's Ludford and Greg Downes.

Only Bart Beecroft and Jonathon Ladic scored for South, while Olympic's Michael Bulis, Chris Tsakiris, Nester, and Danijel Djekanovic were successful.

Zebras went into their match with New Town Eagles needing to win by six clear goals to pip South for a berth in the final.

They started like wildfire, but squandered four chances in the opening few minutes.

With Zebras going full speed ahead, Eagles found the time and space to launch dangerous counter-attacks and should have scored twice from these.

But, it was Zebras who got off the mark in the 10th minute when youngster Braydon Pace headed in Andrew Telega's cross from the right.

In the 17th minute, Pace's fine pass found Ben Crosswell, who beat Andrew Savage to make it 2-0 at the break.

It was not until midway through the second half that Josh Thorpe added the third with a long-range shot. Savage got a hand to the ball but could not keep it out of the top corner.

With two minutes remaining, Crosswell made it 4-0 with a penalty, awarded when he was brought down by Barry Pope.

It was still 4-0 going into stoppage time and Zebras appeared to have blown their chance, but two goals in four minutes produced the miracle.

First, Crosswell completed his hat-trick with a superb low drive to make it 5-0, and in the 4th minute of stoppage time, Pace headed home Aaron Brazendale's cross from the right to send the Zebras supporters into raptures.

In the other game of the weekend, a 21st-minute lob by captain Josh Fielding gave Glenorchy Knights a 1-0 win over Kingborough Lions United.

By Walter Pless
Photos by Walter Pless

SUMMER SOCCER SWITCH

Women's League Makes The Seasonal Change

The Summer League, the latest brainchild of the FFV to assist with State team selection, is rapidly heading towards the conclusion of its first season.

The female leagues have produced some interesting results, with different zones proving strong in each of the age groups, suggesting a spread of talent across the whole of Victoria. With this new venture now in its final stages, it's time to review the positives and negatives of the inaugural season, from the point of view of the female competition.

The female leagues have been played with mixed success, with greater strength evident in the underage competitions. With clear pathways to State squads established for those players, the girls have proved more supportive of the new venture and this has resulted in an almost full complement of teams in each of the leagues. The same cannot be said of the Open Women's competition. It has received little support from the WPL clubs, with club coaches reluctant to encourage their key players to participate. As a result, the bulk of the Summer League squads consist of WPL reserves players, and players from State League clubs. The question among the players has been what is the incentive for an open age player to play in the Summer League, with no State team to represent, and uncertainty and suspicion over the veracity of it leading to W-league selection.

Speaking as a player, the Summer League has been both an enjoyable and, at times, frustrating experience. The opportunity to play with a different cohort of players, be exposed to new coaches and alternative methods, to have the ability to maintain fitness through the off-season and to have an avenue to keep playing during the summer months has been fantastic. That said, frustrations have arisen with the inconsistent and frankly bizarre scheduling of the competition. While not helped by the number of participating teams, there seems to have been little consideration given to fair scheduling, and so we will end this inaugural season with some teams having played each other three times, while having faced others only once. At the time of writing, there is also still uncertainty over whether the competitions will culminate in finals, as was the original intention, or be decided on a first past the post basis.

Conflict has also arisen since the resumption of the competition after the Christmas and New Year break. The majority of players and many of the coaches involved in the Summer League are now involved in pre-season training for their respective winter clubs, creating difficulties in scheduling training sessions that are worthwhile and viable for everyone. Intensity and commitment has noticeably dropped off, as players suffer the physical and mental fatigue that comes with the rigours of trying to combine an often gruelling pre-season schedule with the in-season training of Summer League. This has resulted in some casualties, with players dropping out of the Summer League, or in the case of South-East Open Women, the whole team folding. Ground availability has also become an issue for much the same reason, as clubs that had granted access to their pitches for Summer League training now require them for their own winter teams.

So, where to from here? Assuming that the FFV will continue to promote the Summer League as the pathway to State selection, what lessons need to be learned for the 2009/10 season? Reducing the number of zones is one option that may serve to increase the quality of players, avoid some of the one-sided matches that have eventuated and reduce the number of 'byes' across the leagues. Also, avoiding a 'one size fits all' policy when it comes to the zones would be of great benefit. While the division of zones may make sense on a geographical basis, or might be better suited to the male competitions, the zones have not presented real equity in the female leagues. Those clubs that are strong in the male form of the game, are not necessarily those with strong female teams, and hence there is an uneven distribution of players within the girls' and women's competitions. It would also seem logical to reduce the length of the competition, by instead focusing on a short, intense season, with all teams playing each other once. The season could then be wrapped up by Christmas, allowing players to concentrate on their winter club pre-seasons after New Year, and avoiding the scheduling difficulties presented by the often extreme heat of the summer months.

The true test of the Summer League is still to come, whatever the results, positives and negatives taken from this season. It will not be until the beginning of the 2009/10 season, when players' bodies are bearing the effects of eighteen months of solid football, and it is again time to decide whether to try out, that the success or failure of the competition can begin to be judged.

By Niki Cook

Photos by John Punshon

EASTERN LIONS PRE-SEASON TOURNAMENT

SATURDAY 7th MARCH
11.00 AMPITCH 1 EASTERN LIONS (RES) v SANDRINGHAM (RES)
1.00 PM PITCH 2 BERWICK (RES) v SOUTHERN STARS (RES)
1.00 PM PITCH 1 EASTERN LIONS v SANDRINGHAM
3.00 PM PITCH 1 BERWICK v SOUTHERN STARS

SATURDAY 14th MARCH
11.00 AM PITCH 1 SANDRINGHAM (RES) v SOUTHERN STARS (RES)
1.00 PM PITCH 2 EASTERN LIONS (RES) v BERWICK (RES)
1.00 PM PITCH 1 SANDRINGHAM v SOUTHERN STARS
3.00 PM PITCH 1 EASTERN LIONS v BERWICK

SATURDAY 21st MARCH
11.00 AMPITCH 1 BERWICK (RES) v SANDRINGHAM (RES)
1.00 PM PITCH 2 EASTERN LIONS (RES) v SOUTHERN STARS (RES)
1.00 PM PITCH 1 BERWICK v SANDRINGHAM
3.00 PM PITCH 1 EASTERN LIONS v SOUTHERN STARS

This is a Fair Play tournament. All players and spectators are expected to enter into the spirit of the event. There is no entry fee for this tournament.

Eastern Lions SC will have food and drink available at reasonable prices during the day. The bar will also be open.

Eastern Lions S.C., Gardiners Reserve, Sixth Avenue, Burwood 3125 Melway REF 60 J8

Rangers wins Goforyourlife Cup

Geelong Rangers won the Goforyourlife Cup by a single goal against Surfcoast on Sunday night. It was the first time that Rangers had triumphed in a Geelong pre-season cup since 1987 and James Blackburn's superb strike in the 57th minute conjured up memories of Willy Muir's equally spectacular winner all those years ago. Rangers hit the woodwork in the first minute and twice more in the second half through Jonathan Ryan and Troy Hardy and it looked as if the Provisional League team would manage to deny its State League Division Two opponent. Then deep in defence Steven Tillinger launched a long ball forward. Blackburn held it up, beat his man and found enough space to fire a shot into the top corner of Barry Schroeter's goal. The young keeper had no chance with that one. Ian Crane, Rorie Flanagan and James Brooks worked their socks off for Surfcoast, but Rangers had most of the possession and its game only broke down in front of goal.

In the third place match, Geelong overcame Corio by a goal to nil. Zoran Rstevski was brought in the last minute of the first half and Nick Bosevski scored from the penalty spot. Bosevski had played as sweeper all through the tournament, but for this game he was moved into attack and he came closest to adding to Geelong's lead with a header which just skimmed the bar from a corner by Chris Balaburova.

By Roy Hay

Photos by Roy Hay

James Blackburn (centre) of Geelong Rangers in action in the Goforyourlife Cup.

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IT'S OSSIE! OSSIE! OSSIE!

Ardiles Tops Coaching Bill At Sydney Conference

ARGENTINA and Tottenham Hotspur midfield legend Ossie Ardiles headlined an all-star cast at Football Federation Australia's three-day coaching conference in Sydney a fortnight ago.

The diminutive 1978 World Cup winner was joined on the conference agenda by Han Berger, FFA's National Technical Director, whose brief is to bring world's best practice to the technical development of talented Australian players.

Berger joined FFA from Dutch premier league club De Graafschap where he was director of football for four years. He has a long and distinguished coaching career including a stint as head coach of FC Utrecht, FC Groningen, Fortuna Sittard and Sparta Rotterdam.

Berger will oversee, but not coach, all national youth teams and work closely with national youth team coaches as well as developing emerging elite level coaches. He also will collaborate with the national women's coach and women's technical director Tom Sermanni, another conference speaker.

Darren Burgess, head of sports science for FFA and Socceroos fitness coach, also was a keynote speaker as was former Socceroo Alistair Edwards, who took part in Australia's 1994 and 1998 World Cup qualifying campaigns. Edwards currently serves as FFA's development and high performance consultant.

Tony Franken, former Australian Olympic and youth team keeper, is head goalkeeper coach for all Australian national teams. Franken worked with the legendary Guus Hiddink at the 2006 World Cup finals in Germany and was another keynote speaker along with Dr Istvan Gorgenyi, famous Hungarian water polo player.

Dr Gorgenyi is a world-renowned expert on group dynamics and performance and has successfully implemented the coaching and management applications of his theory across cultural, language, professional and sporting environments for three decades.

Also on the speaking agenda were Mauricio Marques, consultant for Escola Brasiliera de Futbol, member of the Coach Education Department of Brazilian Football and Clube Atlético Mineiro; Erich Rutemoller, chief instructor of the German Soccer Association; FFA consultant Ron Smith; Socceroos head coach Pim Verbeek; and Jan Versleijen, head coach of the Young Socceroos and the Australian Institute of Sport's football program.

Verbeek was blunt about his role and how he will be judged. He said that his brief was to get Australia to the next World Cup Finals and intimated that people who wanted entertainment should look elsewhere as results were all that mattered with the national team.

It was the second such annual conference under the auspices of FFA and was attended by around 350 coaches from all over Australia.

It cost $500 for coaches to attend and among the attendees were Langwarrin head coach Guus Macleod (formerly Gus but now fully assimilated into all things Dutch) and Doveton mentor Jim Van Morrison.

Argentina and Spurs legend Ossie Ardiles was the star speaker at FFA's second national coaching conference in Sydney.

STARS ROLL OUT TO SUPPORT HAITI

US Unites for Inaugural "Setanta Cup"

Setanta Sports, the leading broadcaster of Barclays Premier League soccer in the US and Official Sports Channel of the Field House at Chelsea Piers, announced that it will be hosting the first annual "Setanta Cup" to celebrate its roll-out into the New York area.

This all-day soccer festival will feature tournaments for youth (U-10 to U14) and adult teams, with proceeds from team registration fees, merchandise sales and raffles going to the nonprofit organization, Hollywood Unites for Haiti and the Chelsea Piers Scholarship Fund. The tournament coincides with the recent launch of Setanta on WorldDirect, Verizon FiOS TV, AT&T U-verse and RCN in the tri-state area, complementing the availability of the channel via DIRECTV and DISH.

On April 11th, this inaugural indoor soccer tournament is open to all spectators and will bring together some of the region's top clubs at the Field House at Chelsea Piers in NYC. Games will run 15 minutes and the "Setanta Cup" and individual prizes will be awarded to the winning team in each division. In addition, there will be complimentary youth soccer clinics throughout the day, and JetBlue Airways will sponsor special exhibition matches in the afternoon featuring the Hollywood United Football Club, a star-studded, world famous soccer club.

Former Green Gully player, Costas Mandylor, with Vinnie Jones (ex-Wimbledon FC) and Jason Statham (Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels), will be pulling on the boots for a worthy cause in New York.

Hollywood United's lineup* as of today includes Anthony LaPaglia ("Without a Trace"), Brandon Routh ("Superman"), Jimmy Jean-Louis ("Heroes"), Steve Jones ("Sex Pistols"), Youri Djorkaeff and Frank LeBoeuf (Former French Players and 1998 FIFA World Cup Winners), Gilles Marini ("Sex and the City"), Ethan Zohn (Co-founder Grassroot Soccer and "Survivor Africa" Winner), Costas Mandylor ("Saw"), Donal Logue ("Life"), Richard Gough (Glasgow Rangers, Scottish International), and Marc Consuelos (World Renown Actor), plus many more yet to be announced.

During the day, prizes will be raffled and commemorative merchandise will be for sale, with proceeds going to Hollywood Unites For Haiti (HUFH). HUFH, is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote sports and cultural activities for the underprivileged youth of Haiti.

HUFH founder Jimmy Jean-Louis remarked, "Haiti has suffered many setbacks in its rich history and yet the Haitian people have never lost the character to face adversity with creativity, resilience, and community. Events like the Setanta Cup raise money that will help brighten the hearts and minds of kids and encourage them to build confidence, competence, and community."

Additionally, a portion of team entrance fees will be donated to the Chelsea Piers Scholarship Fund (CPSF). CPSF is a charity committed to providing New York City children in need with the opportunity to experience the enormous benefits and enjoyment of participation in athletics. Monies raised through CPSF are used to provide partial and full scholarships to sports activities at Chelsea Piers and throughout NYC. Since 1996, CPSF has provided sports opportunities for over 1,000 children and has given out close to $1million in athletic grants.

For more information and how to donate to help the people of Haiti please check www.hufh.org.

UNITED KEEPS EYE ON FIVE

St Mirren Shocks Celtic, Inter In Command

England's most prestigious cup competition took centre stage this weekend, as Manchester United honed in on a domestic treble. Elsewhere, St. Mirren gained a quick revenge against Celtic in the Scottish Cup, Bayern and Paris St Germain closed the gap at the top of their respective leagues, while Barcelona and Inter strengthened their grip on the Primera Liga and Serie A titles.

Goal! Weekly reporter Julius Ross has all the action from Europe.

UNITED QUINTET FIRMLY ON CARDS

Can they be stopped? You wouldn't bet against them. **Manchester United** is on track to bag five trophies this season, after Sir Alex Ferguson's men brushed aside **Fulham's** FA Cup quarter-final challenge at Craven Cottage on Saturday.
Unable to contain United's relentless attacking forays, Fulham succumbed to a Carlos Tevez first-half brace at the Cottage, before Wayne Rooney and Park Ji-Sung doubled the score line in the second half against the hapless Londoners.
The 4-0 rout sends United into the last four of the FA Cup for a record 26th time, and having already won two trophies this season – the World Club Cup, and the Carling Cup last weekend – the Red Devils are on target to add the Barclays Premier League, the European Champions League and now the FA Cup to their haul.
Guus Hiddink's in-form **Chelsea** may prove to be the final opponent to United's clean sweep, with the Blues reaching their third FA Cup semi-final in four seasons, and the Londoners currently sitting second, seven points behind United, in the search for the Premier League title.
Chelsea dispatched of Coca-Cola Championship side **Coventry City**, through goals from Didier Dorgba and Brazilian Alex to maintain the side's 100% record under new coach Hiddink.
The Blues had failed at the same hurdle last season to Championship side Barnsley, but there was no repeat as Chelsea registered a determined display.
While the FA Cup fixtures took centre-stage in England, Premier League strugglers **Tottenham** and **Sunderland** fought out a controversial 1-1 draw, with Robbie Keane rescuing a point for Spurs in contentious circumstances, in the 89th minute.

CELTIC FALL VICTIM OF THEIR OWN COMPLACENCY

Having handed St. Mirren a footballing lesson last week in the Scottish Premier League, **Celtic** could be forgiven for thinking their Scottish Cup clash against the same opposition would produce a similar result to their 7-0 thrashing the previous week.
But complacency has cost Celtic a berth in the semi-finals of the Cup – and the chance of a domestic treble – after **St. Mirren** recorded a remarkable 1-0 win over the Scottish heavyweights.
St. Mirren looked a changed side, with the Buddies' defensive structure much more solid and their goalkeeper, Chris Smith, who had conceded seven in the side's last clash with Celtic, pulling off some marvellous saves.
Billy Mehmet was the hero for St. Mirren, the Englishman dispatching a 55th minute penalty after Celtic captain Stephen McManus fouled Craig Dargo inside the box.

Manchester United´s player Carlos Tevez (L) clashes with Fulham´s Aaron Hughes (R) during their FA cup match at home to Fulham at Craven Cottage football stadium. Tevez scored twice as Manchester United kept their bid to win five trophies this season on track with a crushing 4-0 win away to Fulham in the FA Cup quarter-finals on Saturday.

MUNICH TO RETURN TO TOP?

German champions **Bayern Munich** have gone a step closer in a bid to retain their Bundesliga crown, after they thrashed **Hannover** 5-1 on Saturday to move to second spot on the ladder.
Bayern's victory was even more impressive, considering captain Mark van Bommel, Luca Toni and Franck Ribery were all missing from the starting line-up.
After a slow start to the season, Bayern are hitting form at exactly the right time, as Juergen Klinsmann's side jumped from fourth place to second, trailing leader Hertha Berlin by four points.
The Bundesliga title race is wide open with Hertha (46) being chased by Munich, Hoffenheim, Wolfsburg and Hamburg – all on 42 points.
Wolfsburg is a strong contender at this stage of the competition, having won five matches in a row, while **Hamburg's** chances were dealt a severe blow; suffering a 4-1 loss at the hands of struggler **Borussia Moenchengladbach** who lifted themselves from the bottom of the table for the first time since last November.
Hertha has Ukrainian striker Andriy Voronin to thank for its lofty position, with the on-loan Liverpool forward hitting a hat-tick to hand his side a 3-1 win against **Energie Cottbus**, taking his tally to six goals in four matches.

PSG WITHIN ONE POINT OF LYON

Paris St Germain are within one point of spoiling French Ligue 1 leader **Olympique Lyon's** chances of an eighth successive title, thanks to a stunning volley from Ludovic Giuly.
The French title race has become somewhat of a formality over the past seven seasons, with Lyon rarely challenged at the top of the table.
However, PSG are hoping to change this reoccurring phenomenon in France, with Giuly's superb strike heaping pressure on Lyon, and handing his side a 1-0 win at **Lorient** on Saturday.

MADRID DERBY NO GOOD FOR REAL

Real Madrid's title hopes were dealt a significant blow as they dropped a vital two points against their archrivals **Atletico** in the Madrid derby.
Now trailing Barcelona by six points with 12 games left, the reigning Spanish champions' 10-match winning streak was brought to an abrupt end at the Bernabeu, with a determined Atletico grabbing a point from the hosts in a pulsating 1-1 draw.
Meanwhile, Primera Liga leaders **Barcelona** took full advantage of Real's slip, recording a comfortable 2-0 victory over **Athletic Bilbao** through goals from Sergio Busquets and Lionel Messi penalty, and registering their first win in six matches in all competitions.

INTER 10 CLEAR IN SERIE A

Jose Mourinho's **Inter Milan** have lengthened the gap between themselves and their closest title rivals, Juventus, by seven points after becoming the first Serie A side to beat **Genoa** at the Stadio Luigi Ferraris all season.
The blue half of Milan have the title firmly in their sights, with this latest 2-0 victory – courtesy of Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Mario Balotelli – giving Mourinho's side a healthy lead at the top.
Until Saturday's defeat, Genoa had turned the Luigi Ferraris into a fortress, going the whole season unbeaten at their home ground; however visitors Inter punished Genoa's wasteful finishing on this occasion to end an impressive home record.

EPL STANDINGS

	P	GD	PTS
1 Manchester United	27	+36	65
2 Chelsea	28	+32	58
3 Liverpool	28	+25	58
4 Aston Villa	28	+13	52
5 Arsenal	28	+15	49
6 Everton	28	+8	45
7 West Ham United	28	+0	39
8 Manchester City	28	+9	35
9 Wigan Athletic	28	+0	35
10 Fulham	27	+1	34
11 Bolton Wanderers	28	-10	33
12 Tottenham Hotspur	28	+0	32
13 Sunderland	28	-8	32
14 Hull City	28	-16	32
15 Stoke City	28	-17	29
16 Newcastle United	28	-11	28
17 Portsmouth	27	-15	28
18 Blackburn Rovers	27	-13	27
19 Middlesbrough	28	-20	26
20 West Bromwich Albion	28	-29	22

BUNDESLIGA

	P	GD	PTS
1 Hertha BSC	23	+11	46
2 Bayern München	23	+18	42
3 Hoffenheim	23	+18	42
4 VfL Wolfsburg	23	+18	42
5 Hamburger SV	23	+0	42
6 VfB Stuttgart	23	+10	39
7 Schalke 04	23	+9	37
8 Bayer Leverkusen	22	+14	36
9 Borussia Dortmund	23	+5	33
10 Werder Bremen	23	+8	29
11 1. FC Köln	23	-6	29
12 Hannover 96	23	-17	24
13 Eintracht Frankfurt	22	-9	23
14 VfL Bochum	22	-9	21
15 Arminia Bielefeld	22	-13	20
16 Energie Cottbus	23	-19	20
17 Borussia M'gladbach	23	-16	19
18 Karlsruher SC	23	-22	17

SPL STANDINGS

	P	GD	PTS
1 Celtic FC	28	+35	63
2 Rangers FC	28	+37	60
3 Hearts	28	+2	48
4 Dundee United	28	+3	43
5 Aberdeen FC	28	+3	40

SERIE A STANDINGS

	P	GD	PTS
1 Inter Milan	27	+28	63
2 Juventus	27	+22	56
3 AC Milan	26	+16	48
4 Fiorentina	26	+13	46
5 Genoa	27	+9	45
6 AS Roma	27	+6	45
7 Cagliari	26	+5	38
8 Lazio Roma	26	+0	38
9 Atalanta	26	+3	36
10 Palermo	26	-3	36
11 Napoli	26	+2	35
12 Udinese	27	-1	35
13 Catania	26	-2	33
14 Sampdoria	26	-4	32
15 Siena	26	-7	28
16 Torino	27	-15	24
17 Bologna	26	-15	23
18 Verona	26	-15	23
19 Lecce	26	-19	22
20 Reggina	26	-23	18

By Julius Ross

Photos by Soccer Way

BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

A-League Battles For Asian Supremacy

In the wake of the Socceroos' disappointing loss to Kuwait, Tony Persoglia examines the state of the A-League and the hurdles it must overcome to take its place among Asia's elite domestic football competitions.

The fallout from Australia's loss to Kuwait in Canberra raises a number of questions about the A-League and its status as a domestic league competition in Asia. In isolation, the result reflects the inexperience of the players that took the pitch on Thursday evening. However, not a long time ago in 2006, an Australian A-League squad coached by the much maligned Graham Arnold posted a comfortable victory over a strikingly similar Kuwaiti outfit in Sydney.

That squad included a number of seasoned internationals (Clint Bolton, Kevin Muscat, Archie Thompson, Jade North and Steve Corica), a significant level of club experience (Joel Griffiths, Sash Petrovski, Alvin Ceccoli and Michael Valkanis) and a smattering of up-and-comers who had impressed in the first season of the A-League (Alex Brosque, Matt McKay, Mark Milligan, Travis Dodd and David Carney). Only Archie Thompson and Matt McKay reprised their roles on Thursday night, with as many as four players making their full international debuts.

Of the group assembled in 2006, North, Griffiths and Milligan have moved to Asian clubs – and by that very definition, should have been available for any Asian Cup qualifiers (all three would have had valid claims for selection) - providing the much needed experience to deliver the desired result. Despite their availability, Pim Verbeek persevered with an A-League selection he is often quick to criticise, believing that their quality was sufficient to topple the best that part-timers Kuwait had to offer. He was either sadly mistaken, or his young charges failed to perform when it counted.

Does this indicate that an A-League Version 1.0 squad is significantly better than what we can produce in Version 4.0? Is enough talent developing at the required rate to take part in the two or three Asian Cup qualifiers every four years, where the inclusion of Australia's thoroughbred internationals is logistically impossible?

The exodus of Australia's talent to Europe and now Asia raises a key concern which FFA must address quickly – the composition and structure of the A-League salary cap. The $1.9 million wage restriction coupled with a marquee system that heavily lends itself to the procurement of overseas stars, is barely enough to secure the handful of regular Socceroos who have elected to return home before their international careers have drawn to a close. Of the clubs who have Australians as their designated marquee player, only Archie Thompson could make the starting line-up in Canberra.

The Melbourne Victory swept all before them in a eight team national competition. But is that enough to rate against Asia's best?

An increase in the base salary cap is a step in the right direction to addressing the problem, but the player marquee system must be reviewed and structured to achieve its full potential. The inclusion of an Australian marquee (coupled with the already existing Youth marquee) to compliment a clearly defined International marquee is necessary to ensure that the very best Australian talent can be lured back home. Having three players outside the salary cap allows clubs with enough flexibility to encourage quality recruitment (and retention), without providing a significant advantage to the cash rich clubs.

Balancing the commercial needs of the A-League with the development of Australia's burgeoning talent pool is a significant factor that FFA is confronted with in the short-term. A twenty-one match home-and-away league season can hardly compete with the rigorous schedules prevalent in Japan, Korea and China – where seasons often tick over 50+ games when coupled with regular domestic and intercontinental cup competitions.

In the twelve months between their first appearance in the 2008 Asian Champions League and the 2008/09 A-League Grand Final - Adelaide United competed in 40 official club fixtures – often commenting on the physical demands represented by such a 'torturous' campaign. As a comparison, the J-League's Gamba Osaka, the 2008 ACL Champions, played 58 competitive club fixtures in five separate competitions in less than ten months. In terms of competitive club football – the gap is alarming.

In overcoming this chasm of genuine competition, the FFA must abandon its reluctance to assume head-on engagement with the AFL and NRL, particularly as the A-League initially expands to ten teams next season, and again to twelve for the following campaign. The key question should not be if the season is extended, but how?

Talk of the introduction of a six-team finals series is completely off the mark, and will do little to reward aspiring clubs who work diligently to build a competitive and robust squad. The focus must shift towards a football calendar with a minimum of thirty league matches played on a home-and-away basis. Not only will this help to elevate the domestic league to the level of its main rivals, but it will challenge A-League clubs to assemble squads that are capable of handling the rigours of truly competitive club football.

FFA will do well to abandon its desire to have its finals series clash with the beginning of the ACL preliminary phase. Australian clubs have largely been unsuccessful in advancing from this stage of the tournament, largely due to a lack of match fitness normally attained from playing in regular league competition. All of the top Asian clubs are in the heart of their domestic campaigns during the March-May period, where as Australia's A-League aspirants are enjoying a break in their extended off-season. A move to a domestic season commencing in August and concluding in May will go a long way to addressing this issue.

The introduction of an FA cup style competition has also been touted by FFA, a concept which has been explored to ensure that additional places are offered to Australian clubs in the ACL. As well as providing established A-League clubs with another opportunity to qualify for this tournament, it will no doubt open the intercontinental door to state league clubs, ultimately raising the bar at the next tier of domestic football – which has sadly remained unaddressed since the overhaul of top level club football in 2004.

One only has to look at the evolution of the J-League to know that the road may indeed be rocky before that final destination is reached. The J-League took several steps back after its initial success in the mid 1990's, before finally developing a level of stability at the turn of the century. It has established long term goals through the development of its 'Hundred Year Vision' (100 professional football clubs by the year 2092) and expanded to two divisions in 1999, developing a promotion-relegation system for clubs aspiring to reach the top flight.

These strategies are simplified solutions to problems which have more depth and complexity than any confronted by football's past administrations. The inclusion of Australia into the AFC has brought with it many challenges, and the governing body has only scratched the surface at the potential on offer. A healthy domestic competition will not only provide extensive commercial opportunities, but ultimately improve the depth of talent available to the national team, avoiding scenarios like that which played out on Thursday evening against Kuwait. FFA's ability to elevate the A-League to a competitive platform will rely heavily on investment, expertise and the establishment of solid foundations, and is without question the most critical item on its crowded agenda.

By Tony Persoglia

Photo by Daniel Flis

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BENDING OVER BECKHAM

The Goldenballs Saga Approaches Climax

When the Ancient Greeks invaded a foreign land they would offload their warriors from the boats onto the enemy's shore. Then their commanders would make the order to burn the boats, removing any idea of retreat.

Though not as dramatic, David Beckham's public desire to join AC Milan has made the idea of him returning to Los Angeles hard to imagine, especially if the messages of anger from LA Galaxy fans on forums and chatrooms are a barometer.

He is expected back in LA on March 9th and as that deadline approaches Beckham is said to be increasingly frustrated at the failure of the two clubs to agree a fee. Considering he is as welcome in LA as a rainstorm his angst is understandable.

There is no doubt Beckham's days with the Galaxy are numbered. He can terminate his MLS contract in November and has stated that despite Milan's embarrassing exit from the UEFA Cup and their ineptitude in Serie A that nothing has changed his mind about staying in Italy. That said, at the time of writing he is still contracted to the LA Galaxy. My question is what does the future hold for Beckham?

It may seem an odd question given my assertion he'll be a Milan player come what may.
The question is when will that happen?

Stories out of Italy report the Rossoneri want to keep Beckham on loan until the end of the season, a stunt they tried – and failed with - in January. In their proposal he would stay in Milan until June 30th and rejoin the Galaxy until November. Then kick his heels before joining Milan in January 2010 on a free transfer.

It is a compromise that offers scant upside for the Galaxy – Beckham would miss three months of the MLS season. The Galaxy, in true Hollywood style, has played the role of scorned lover perfectly, requesting a costly divorce settlement of $10million USD from Milan. Yet for all their public willingness to hang onto Beckham, LA don't have much wiggle room. Why keep a player who is hell bent on leaving and can go in just over 8 months anyway? Why not accept a fee?

That's because money isn't the issue for the club with the mega-rich owner. I am certain the Galaxy will flex their muscles and insist Beckham rejoins them simply because they can. One thing Beckham won't do is break his contract, and forfeit all that money, so come March 22nd we could have the interesting sight of Beckham trotting out at the Home Depot centre to face a hostile LA crowd, oh and D.C. United.

The saga was orchestrated by Milan publicly declaring they wanted to extend his loan agreement. However, they wouldn't have done this without taking Beckham's wishes into account. You do have to wonder if his intention all along when he signed the loan contract was to find a way to make the stay permanent. Perhaps that is too cynical of me. Bear in mind though that Adriano Galliani, the Milan vice president, was making noises about Beckham staying long before the player was more-or-less forced into "coming out" and confirming it.

It is understandable why Beckham wishes to stay at Milan. In one interview he explained the training was "intense" and the players "world class". Meaning LA isn't up to the same standard.

But why does Milan want him and what will be his role over the long-term?

He is still an excellent free-kick taker, crosser and passer of the ball. However this isn't the long-term acquisition a team like Milan needs. Given the average age of their first xi is 31 it could be argued they are not only getting older, even with Beckham in the team, they aren't getting markedly better. There are other areas of their team needing improvement, such as their defence and midfield, areas with a total lack of speed.

Yet in many respects, just like the signing of Ronaldinho, a player with much to offer but clearly way past his best, any deal for Beckham makes sense for commercial reasons. For those who argue otherwise answer this: if Becks is that good why aren't other major European clubs interested in him?

For Beckham, 34 in May, the sedate speed of Milan's play suits him down to the ground. To accommodate his ageing legs he has a central midfield role with the only requirement he run up and down the pitch in straight lines and sprint to take free kicks before Andrea Pirlo gets there first.

Also central midfield is his best position. He can play long through balls or cross field balls and occasionally pull wide to deliver crosses. Plus in a Milan midfield that has as much energy as a retirement home, he has played well and appears to be fitter than his marginally younger colleagues.

Mama Mia! Milano or Los Angeles?
Poor David is torn between two lovers again.

Overall a permanent move will be of great benefit to Beckham and England. He will be in the world spotlight once again, playing in a major European league (as well as the UCL) with a big club.

One thing to look out for will be the length of his contract with the Rossoneri. My gut suspects he'll sign one taking him up to his 36th birthday and the 2012 European championships in Poland & Ukraine before he calls time on his great career.

Yes he could go back to England and serve a few more years at a small EPL club but Beckham doesn't strike me as one of those footballers who will prolong his career with a stint at clubs such as Blackburn or Middlesbrough. Also I can't really see Victoria Beckham swapping the fashion capital of Europe for a stroll down the rain swept high streets of northern England.

Then again you can never say never, especially if he does go back to LA on March 9th. Beckham may have burned his boat but unfortunately for him he has a plane to take him back to LA.

By Leroy Jerome Robinson

Photos by Paparazzi

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JASON DAVIDSON

HUME CITY FC

goal! Weekly
FOOTBALL FOCUS

Photo by John Punshon

FULL NAME: Jason Alan Davidson
BIRTHPLACE: Melbourne
BIRTH DATE: 29th June 1991
HEIGHT: 180cm
WEIGHT: 75kg
MARRIED: No
CAR: No
OCCUPATION OUTSIDE OF FOOTBALL: Student
NICKNAME: Davo
PREVIOUS CLUBS: Seiritsu FC. Tokyo, Japan.
REPRESENTATIVE HONOURS: Called up for Australian U'20 National Training
CHILDHOOD FOOTBALL HERO: Diego Maradona
FAVOURITE O/S PLAYER: Kaka
FAVOURITE VPL PLAYER: Hume City Teammates
FAVOURITE FORMER SOCCEROO: My dad
FAVOURITE CURRENT SOCCEROO: Harry Kewell
MOST MEMORABLE MATCH AS A PLAYER: Tokyo Championship Final against Kashiwa Reysol
MOST MEMORABLE MATCH AS A FAN: Australia Vs Uruguay (World Cup Qualifier in Sydney)
MOST MEMORABLE GOAL YOU'VE SCORED: Winner against Kashima Antlers Semi Final
EARLIEST FOOTBALL MEMORY: Mascot for Pahang FC in Malaysia
FUNNIEST MOMENT IN FOOTBALL: Teammate forgot shorts, made to trained in his undies
BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT: Missed a Tokyo Cup Final due to injury
WORST INJURY: Minor-Torn Meniscus
MOST DIFFICULT OPPONENT: Urawa Reds/Japan U18 National Captain
FAVOURITE AWAY GROUND: FC Tokyo
SUPERSTITIONS: None
TYPICAL MATCH DAY MEAL: Plate of Fruit & Plate of Pasta.
WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS: Football, determination/intelligence
WHAT ARE YOUR WEAKNESSES: At the moment my age
FAVOURITE TEAM WHEN GROWING UP: Manchester United
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTS: AFL, Boxing and Swimming
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTS PERSON: Mohammed Ali
FAVOURITE FOODS: Greek Food
FAVOURITE ACTOR/ACTRESS: Morgan Freedmen / Angelina Jolie
HOBBIES: Movies, Biographies, Socializing, Distance Running
FAVOURITE HOLIDAY RESORT: Kuantan, Malaysia
FAVOURITE NIGHTSPOT: I am underage
IDEAL DATE: Romantic Dinner
FAVOURITE TV SHOWS: Entourage
FAVOURITE MUSIC: House
FAVOURITE FILM: Rocky
LAST SOCCER SHIRT YOU BOUGHT: None
FUNNIEST RUMOUR YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT YOURSELF: None
BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON CAREER: Dad
BIGGEST DRAG IN SOCCER: Injuries
FOOTBALL AMBITION: To play at the highest level I can
WHICH PERSON IN THE WORLD WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET? : Diego Maradona
YOUR TIP FOR THIS YEAR'S VPL: Hume City FC

FUTSAL SUPER 5's
5-A-SIDE INDOOR SOCCER
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Russell Howcroft – Advertising Guru

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